



The  
**THIN FINE LINE**

THE SEQUEL TO *IMPROVE YOUR BIDDING JUDGMENT*

NEIL KIMELMAN

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Ideally a book would have no order to it, and the reader would have to discover his own.

— Mark Twain

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# FOREWORD

*A person who never made a mistake never tried anything new.*

— Albert Einstein

This book is the second in a series on bidding judgment. I received some very positive feedback on *Improve Your Bidding Judgment*. It is a wonderful feeling knowing that you have helped others to improve their bidding.

The more you read and practice bidding principles, the better will be your actual performance. I often use the analogy of crossing your arms. It is usually very comfortable to do it one way, but not the other. Only after much practice does crossing your arms the ‘unnatural way’ start to feel easier to do, without conscious thought.

The same is true with bidding. The more you practice and are ‘present’ at the bridge table, the easier these judgments and bids will become. Once certain types of thought processes and judgments become more automatic, you can focus on more complex bids/judgment, as well as maintain a consistent bidding tempo.

I have tried to identify key areas of bidding judgment that were not dealt with in *Improve your Bidding Judgment*. In addition, I have added a couple of chapters on agreements that I have identified as important tools in your bidding arsenal.

I would like to thank Bob Todd and Don Pearsons for their contributions to content, grammatical review and feedback.

Now sit back, and enjoy *The Thin Fine Line*. I hope to see you at future tournaments.

-Neil Kimelman

# Chapter 1

# DID YOU READ MY FIRST BOOK?

This quiz serves as a reminder of the bidding principles I covered in *Improve Your Bidding Judgment*. Just think of it as a warm-up for the new material.

## PROBLEM 1

N-S vul., IMPs. As South you hold:

♠ A J 8   ♥ A 5   ♦ J 9 8 7 4   ♣ Q J 4			
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		2♥	dbl
pass	3♦ <sup>1</sup>	pass	?

1. Constructive, usually 7-11 HCP.

## PROBLEM 2

Both vul., IMPs. You hold as South:

♠ Q 10   ♥ A J 7 6 4   ♦ J 2   ♣ K 9 8 6			
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	2♦ <sup>1</sup>	pass	2♥ <sup>2</sup>
dbl	pass	4♠	?

1. Multi.
2. Pass or correct.

## PROBLEM 3

Neither vul., IMPs. As South you hold:



♠ K Q 10 6 5   ♥ 2   ♦ A 8   ♣ A K 9 6 4

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		pass	1♠
pass	2♦	pass	3♣
pass	3♦	pass	?

#### PROBLEM 4

Both vul., matchpoints. You hold as South:

♠ 8   ♥ K 9 8   ♦ A 10 9 5 4 2   ♣ J 6 5

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		5♣	pass
pass	dbl	pass	?

#### PROBLEM 5

Both vul., IMPs. You hold as South:

♠ 7   ♥ K 4 2   ♦ K 2   ♣ K Q J 10 6 5 2

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
3♠	pass	pass	?

#### PROBLEM 6

Both vul., IMPs. You hold as South:

♠ A Q 10 8   ♥ 3   ♦ A Q 5   ♣ K J 6 5 4

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♣	2♥ <sup>1</sup>	pass	?

1. Weak.

## PROBLEM 7

E-W vul., IMPs. You hold as South:

♠ — ♥ A K Q 8 6 3 ♦ 6 4 2 ♣ 10 8 7 6

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		1♣	1♥
2♠ <sup>1</sup>	3♣ <sup>2</sup>	4♠	?

1. Weak.

2. Three-plus hearts, invitational-plus values.

## PROBLEM 8

Both vul., IMPs, you hold as South:

♠ 3 ♥ A K 4 ♦ K Q J 5 4 ♣ Q 9 8 2

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♠	pass	2♦
pass	3♥ <sup>1</sup>	pass	?

1. Splinter, but does not promise extra values.

## PROBLEM 9

Both vul., IMPs. You hold as South:

♠ J 6 2   ♥ A K 10 4   ♦ J 3   ♣ K 10 8 6

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1♣
pass	1♠	pass	1NT
pass	2♦ <sup>1</sup>	pass	2♥
pass	2NT	pass	3♠
pass	4♣ <sup>2</sup>	pass	?

1. Game-forcing checkback.
2. Cuebid, slam try in spades.

## PROBLEM 10

Both vul., matchpoints. You hold as South:

♠ A 10   ♥ A Q J 9 4   ♦ 5 4 3   ♣ Q J 8

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		pass	1♥
pass	2♥	2♠	?

## PROBLEM 11

Both vul., IMPs. You hold as South:

♠ A Q 10 8 4   ♥ A K 10 4 2   ♦ —   ♣ A 7 6

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1♠
pass	1NT	pass	3♥
pass	3NT	pass	?

## PROBLEM 12

Both vul., IMPs. You hold as South:

♠ Q 9 ♥ K 5 2 ♦ Q 7 6 ♣ 10 9 5 3 2

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	1♠	pass	1NT
pass	2♥	pass	2♣
pass	3♥	pass	?

## PROBLEM 13

Both vul., IMPs. You hold as South:

♠ A 2 ♥ A 9 7 3 2 ♦ K Q 6 4 2 ♣ 8

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		pass	1♥
pass	1NT	pass	2♦
pass	2NT	pass	?

## PROBLEM 14

Both vul., IMPs. You hold as South:

♠ — ♥ J 6 3 2 ♦ A K Q 8 7 6 ♣ Q 10 8

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♠	pass	2♦
pass	2♣	pass	3♦
pass	4♣	pass	4♦
pass	4♠	pass	?

PROBLEM 15

N-S vul., IMPs. As South you hold:

♠ 9 6 5   ♥ 7 3 2   ♦ K 5 3   ♣ A J 9 7

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♦	pass	1♥
pass	2♣	pass	pass
2♥	3♣	3♥	?

PROBLEM 16

Neither vul., IMPs. You hold as South:

♠ A K 10 9 6 5 2   ♥ K 6 4 3 2   ♦ —   ♣ 8

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1♠
2♦	dbl <sup>1</sup>	3♣	4♥
5♣	pass	pass	5♥
pass	pass	6♦	?

- 1. Negative, promising four-plus hearts.

PROBLEM 17

Both vul., IMPs. You hold as South:

♠ J 8 7 5 3   ♥ A K J 5 4   ♦ A K 10   ♣ —

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1♠
4♣	5♣	6♣	?

## PROBLEM 18

Both vul., matchpoints. You hold as South:

♠ K 10 7 5   ♥ A K   ♦ K 6 2   ♣ Q J 7 2

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	2♥	pass	2NT
pass	3♥ <sup>1</sup>	pass	?

1. Minimum.

## PROBLEM 19

Both vul., IMPs. You hold as South:

♠ Q 6 5 2   ♥ J 8 6 5 2   ♦ 8   ♣ 6 3 2

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♠	2♥	dbl*	?

## PROBLEM 20

Both vul., IMPs. You hold as South:

♠ A K J 3 2   ♥ —   ♦ 10 9   ♣ 9 8 7 4 3 2

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	1♠	2♦	pass
			?

# Solutions to quiz 1

## SOLUTION 1

N-S vul., IMPs. As South you hold:

♠ A J 8   ♥ A 5   ♦ J 9 8 7 4   ♣ Q J 4			
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	3♦ <sup>1</sup>	2♥ pass	dbl ?

1. Constructive, usually 7-11 HCP.

Yes, partner has hit your five-card suit. However, you still have a minimum. Even vulnerable, at teams I would pass — too many losers for 5♦, and not enough tricks for notrump. When this deal came up in the 2005 Canadian National Teams Championship (CNTC), partner had a maximum:

♠ K 10 2   ♥ 10 9 4   ♦ A 10 6 3   ♣ A 6 3

We picked up 6 IMPs when I passed 3♦ and our opposition got too high.

## SOLUTION 2

Both vul., IMPs. You hold as South:

♠ Q 10   ♥ A J 7 6 4   ♦ J 2   ♣ K 9 8 6			
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
dbl	2♦ <sup>1</sup> pass	pass 4♠	2♥ <sup>2</sup> ?

1. Multi.

2. Pass or correct.



Partner has a weak two-bid in hearts — should you sacrifice? No. True, you have a big fit, but you also have a lot of losers. Plus you have 11 HCP, and partner has 6-10. The opponents have less than the normal high-card strength for game, but were denied bidding space by your preempt. In the Swiss Plate at the 2010 World Championships, South bid 5♥ for a 12-IMP loss when 4♠ would have gone down.

### SOLUTION 3

Neither vul., IMPs. As South you hold:

♠ K Q 10 6 5 ♥ 2 ♦ A 8 ♣ A K 9 6 4

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		pass	1♠
pass	2♦	pass	3♣
pass	3♦	pass	?

A splinter to 4♥ is best if you have it available, otherwise you should bid 4♦. You have a good hand opposite partner's six+ diamonds and 2/1 values. Since you cannot make the decision, see if partner is willing to investigate bidding slam.

Partner held

♠ A 9 ♥ Q 10 4 3 ♦ K Q 10 9 6 3 ♣ 7

and will cuebid the ♠A, denying the ♥A. Your 6♦ bid ends a successful auction.

### SOLUTION 4

Both vul., matchpoints. You hold as South:

♠ 8   ♥ K 9 8   ♦ A 10 9 5 4 2   ♣ J 6 5

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		5♣	pass
pass	dbl	pass	?

It looks like your hands are fitting well with your club length, so 5♦ should have a play and 6♦ might make. However, I passed at the table during the final of the 2005 Canadian Open Pairs. It looked likely we would score anywhere from +200 to +800, and if I bid there was no certainty we could find our best spot. I decided to ‘stay fixed’ and passed, which turned out to be right. The full deal:

♠ KJ1032  
 ♥ 653  
 ♦ KJ83  
 ♣ Q

♠ A9654  
 ♥ AQJ7  
 ♦ Q76  
 ♣ 4

♠ Q7  
 ♥ 1042  
 ♦ —  
 ♣ AK1098732

♠ 8  
 ♥ K98  
 ♦ A109542  
 ♣ J65

N  
 W E  
 S

Mike Hargreaves put a lot of pressure on us with the 5♣ opening, but the result was -800 for him; a bottom for them and a top for us. Tournament players nowadays preempt and compete on many more hands than used to be the case; this works a lot of the time as doubles today are used for a variety of non-penalty purposes. Judging when to penalize the opponents is an important skill for all players, and will be explored in detail in Chapters 6 and 7.

## SOLUTION 5

Both vul., IMPs. You hold as South:

♠ 7 ♥ K 4 2 ♦ K 2 ♣ K Q J 10 6 5 2

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
3♣	pass	pass	?

Bid 4♣. You have a very good offensive hand with an excellent suit. You do not want to defend, and bidding 5♣ shows a better hand than you have. ‘What’s the problem?’ you might ask.

Well, in the 2005 Bermuda Bowl, one South doubled. His partner reasonably passed with

♠ 10 9 5 2 ♥ A 10 3 ♦ A J 3 ♣ 8 7 4

and they went -530, while 5♣ could be made on a double squeeze.

## SOLUTION 6

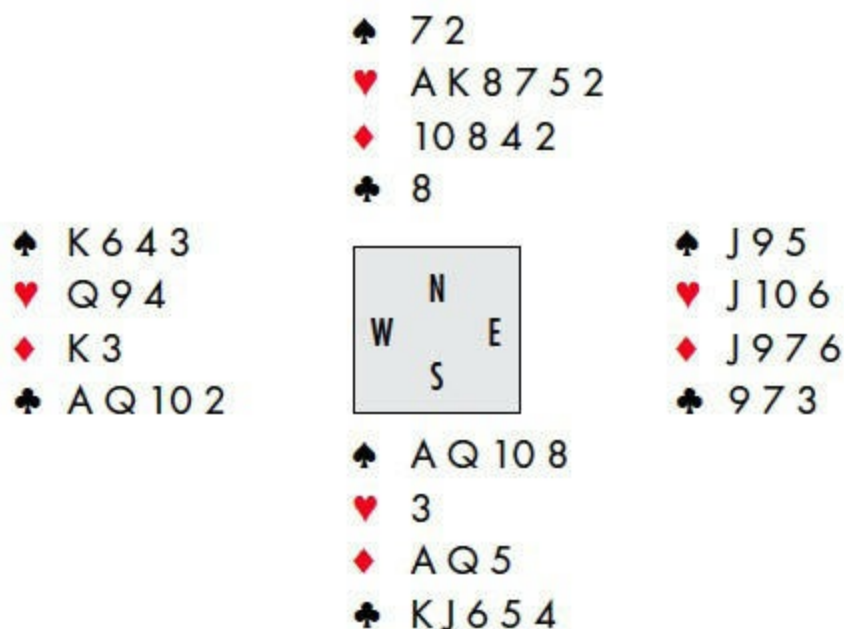
Both vul., IMPs. You hold as South:

♠ A Q 10 8 ♥ 3 ♦ A Q 5 ♣ K J 6 5 4

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♣	2♥ <sup>1</sup>	pass	?

1. Weak.

Pass. You have a lot of high cards, but no fit and no tricks. The full deal:



My team gained 9 IMPs in a Regional K.O. by scoring +110 in 2♥ at this table and +300 defending 3NT at the other table.

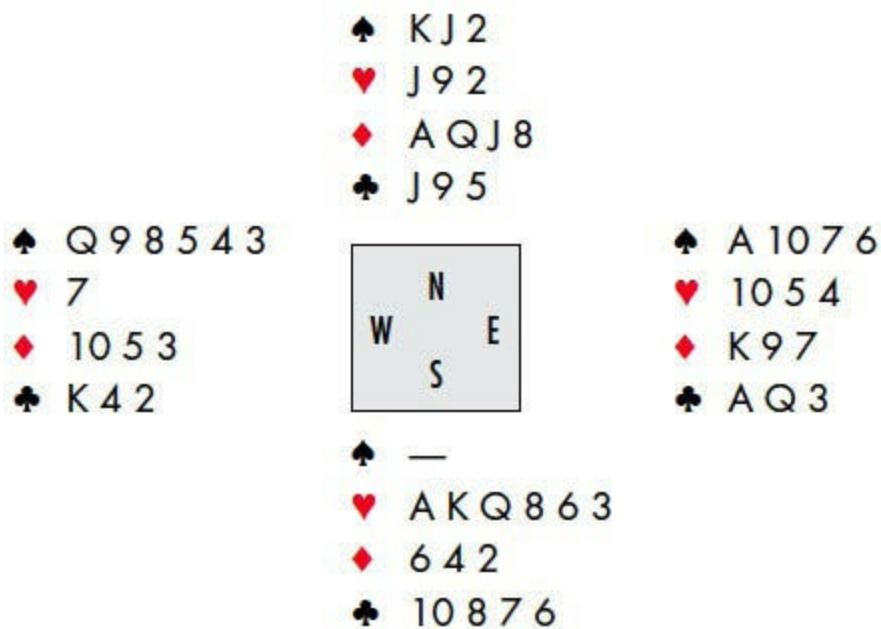
## SOLUTION 7

E-W vul., IMPs. You hold as South:

♠ — ♥ A K Q 8 6 3 ♦ 6 4 2 ♣ 10 8 7 6			
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		1♣	1♥
2♠ <sup>1</sup>	3♣ <sup>2</sup>	4♣	?

1. Weak.
2. Three-plus hearts, invitational-plus values.

Pass. You have an average overcall. Your hearts are great, and you have a sixth one, but you have no high cards outside your suit. Your pass is not forcing, so is ambiguous. You hope partner will bid 5♥, but will respect whatever decision is made regardless. In real life, my partner actually passed, and we had a useful 9 IMP pickup when the other South with my cards bid on. The full deal:



It turns out that 4♠ is down one or two and 5♥ is down two.

## SOLUTION 8

Both vul., IMPs, you hold as South:

<span style="margin: 0 10px;">♠ 3</span> <span style="margin: 0 10px;">♥ A K 4</span> <span style="margin: 0 10px;">♦ K Q J 5 4</span> <span style="margin: 0 10px;">♣ Q 9 8 2</span>			
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	1♠	pass	2♦
	3♥ <sup>1</sup>	pass	?

1. Splinter, but does not promise extra values.

Well, your ♥K is wasted and you have no fit for spades. However, on the plus side you have a good diamond suit, and the ♥K was extra anyway. It is too early to give up. Probably the most descriptive bid is a 4♥ cuebid. It denies first-round control of clubs and is a green light for slam investigation. This is enough for partner to Keycard, and then commit to slam. In the 2009 Venice Cup, South bid 3NT, which ended the auction. Her partner held:

♠ A 9 7 5 2 ♥ — ♦ 10 9 8 2 ♣ A K J 7

and a cold slam had been missed.

## SOLUTION 9

Both vul., IMPs. You hold as South:

♠ J 6 2 ♥ A K 10 4 ♦ J 3 ♣ K 10 8 6

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1♣
pass	1♠	pass	1NT
pass	2♦ <sup>1</sup>	pass	2♥
pass	2NT	pass	3♠
pass	4♣ <sup>2</sup>	pass	?

1. Game-forcing checkback.
2. Cuebid, slam try in spades.

You have promised a hand with 12-14 HCP. You have a minimum in high cards but all of them seem to be working, except the ♦J. In addition you have a ruffing value and two tens. This to me is a clear 4♥ cuebid, and this will propel you into slam. North's hand (from a local Sectional):

♠ A Q 5 4 3 ♥ 8 2 ♦ A K 4 ♣ A Q 3

At the table South bid 4♠, and North very conservatively passed.

## SOLUTION 10

Both vul., matchpoints. You hold as South:

♠ A 10 ♥ A Q J 9 4 ♦ 5 4 3 ♣ Q J 8

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	2♥	pass 2♠	1♥ ?

Pass. You have a good minimum but no distribution and fairly soft cards. Partner can still bid. In a recent LM Pairs, South bid 3♥, which traded in +100 for -300. The full deal (hands rotated):

	♠ Q 9 8 3	
	♥ 10 5 2	
	♦ K J 8 2	
	♣ 10 7	
♠ 4		♠ K J 7 6 5 2
♥ K 6 3		♥ 8 7
♦ A Q 9 7 6		♦ 10
♣ K 6 4 2		♣ A 9 5 3
	♠ A 10	
	♥ A Q J 9 4	
	♦ 5 4 3	
	♣ Q J 8	

## SOLUTION 11

Both vul., IMPs. You hold as South:

♠ A Q 10 8 4 ♥ A K 10 4 2 ♦ — ♣ A 7 6

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	1NT	pass	1♠
pass	3NT	pass	3♥ ?



Bid 4♣. It is more important to show your fragment than your fifth heart. Partner, having denied four hearts, can always bid 4♥ with three-card support. Of course, 3NT might be the right spot, but getting past it is the price you pay for bidding your hand. With good diamonds partner can still return to 4NT. Partner will actually bid 5NT, asking you to pick a slam. North's hand:

♠ 7 ♥ Q 9 8 ♦ J 9 8 5 3 ♣ K Q 10 3

This problem was taken from a deal in the 2005 Canadian IMP Pairs Championship, where North actually held ♥J98. Many Souths bid 4♥ over 3NT, and played there. A lucky lie of the cards meant South could make thirteen tricks in hearts.

## SOLUTION 12

Both vul., IMPs. You hold as South:

♠ Q 9 ♥ K 5 2 ♦ Q 7 6 ♣ 10 9 5 3 2

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	1♠	pass	1NT
pass	2♥	pass	2♠
pass	3♥	pass	?

Bid 4♥. It might not be cold, but vulnerable at teams, you must bid close games (it is one way to improve your declarer play!).

Another way of looking at the problem is that you have shown a weak hand with no strong support for either major. Partner has still risked bidding at the three-level knowing this, thus must have better than a minimum, and will usually have a five- to six-loser hand. Partner's hand:

♠ A K 5 4 2 ♥ A 10 9 6 3 ♦ K J ♣ 4

## SOLUTION 13

Both vul., IMPs. You hold as South:

♠ A 2 ♥ A 9 7 3 2 ♦ K Q 6 4 2 ♣ 8

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		pass	1♥
pass	1NT	pass	2♦
pass	2NT	pass	?

One option is 3♦. This shows what you have and implies minimum values. However, I bid 3NT at the table (and I would do the same even not vulnerable). I visualized that 3NT and 3♦ would have similar chances, and if partner has the ♠K, ♥K and ♦A I have nine tricks as long as they cannot cash five club tricks. In fact, when this deal arose in the 2005 CNTC West led a club from ♣AQ972 and I had nine tricks.

Partner held

♠ 10 9 6 ♥ K 6 ♦ A 10 8 ♣ K J 10 6 3

## SOLUTION 14

Both vul., IMPs. You hold as South:

♠ — ♥ J 6 3 2 ♦ A K Q 8 7 6 ♣ Q 10 8

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♠	pass	2♦
pass	2♠	pass	3♦
pass	4♣	pass	4♦
pass	4♠	pass	?

What do you bid and why?

Pass. Where are you going to go? Partner knows you have good diamonds and no

support for spades (a maximum of one), yet has still suggested a 4♠ contract. Trust partner — you have shown your hand. Partner's hand:

♠ K Q J 10 9 7 ♥ K 8 ♦ 2 ♣ A K 4 2

## SOLUTION 15

N-S vul. IMPs. As South you hold:

♠ 9 6 5 ♥ 7 3 2 ♦ K 5 3 ♣ A J 9 7

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♦	pass	1♥
pass	2♣	pass	pass
2♥	3♣	3♥	?

Bidding 1♥ has helped you to discover that there are no wasted values in hearts.

But have you bid this hand well? No. At your second turn 3♣ is the value call. All your points are working.

What does your partner have? A very good hand! Partner has bid 3♣ without encouragement from you, and you could easily have something like

♠ Q 10 4 3 ♥ K 9 8 7 2 ♦ 3 ♣ 9 7 3

What do you bid, then? Bid 5♣ or even 4♥. That should get you at least to 6♣. When this deal came up in the 2006 CNTC, I sat North and my hand was:

♠ A 3 2 ♥ — ♦ A Q J 10 6 ♣ K Q 5 4 2

## SOLUTION 16

Neither vul., IMPs. You hold as South:

♠ A K 10 9 6 5 2 ♥ K 6 4 3 2 ♦ — ♣ 8

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1♠
2♦	dbl <sup>1</sup>	3♣	4♥
5♣	pass	pass	5♥
pass	pass	6♦	?

1. Negative, promising four-plus hearts.

Bid 6♥. It's not at all clear what if any defense you have against a minor-suit contract. Meanwhile, if partner has as little as the ♥A, 7♥ may make on a non-club lead. The full deal:

	♠ 7 4	
	♥ A J 10 9 8	
	♦ 10 4 3	
	♣ 10 4 3	
♠ J		♠ Q 8 3
♥ Q 7 5		♥ —
♦ A J 9 8 5 2		♦ K Q 7 6
♣ A 7 5		♣ K Q J 9 6 2
	♠ A K 10 9 6 5 2	
	♥ K 6 4 3 2	
	♦ —	
	♣ 8	

## SOLUTION 17

Both vul., IMPs. You hold as South:

♠ J 8 7 5 3   ♥ A K J 5 4   ♦ A K 10   ♣ —

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1♠
4♣	5♣	6♣	?

The opponents have made a scientific approach impossible. You have a very good hand, with the ace-king in both red suits. However, your spades are terrible, and there may be duplication in the club suit. The question you need to ask is, ‘What does partner have?’ Would partner bid that way without both the ♠K and ♠A — for example with:

♠ A x x x x x   ♥ Q x   ♦ Q J x x   ♣ K

This hand has a club control and a huge trump fit, but a dearth of red-suit controls. I think 5♠ is the right value call on this hand, not 5♣. Boye Brogeland went through this thought process during a Spingold a few years ago and came to the conclusion that partner very likely had the ♠AKxx(x), so he bravely and accurately bid the grand. His partner, Rose Meltzer, did have the ♠AKxxx and there were no red-suit losers.

## SOLUTION 18

Both vul., matchpoints. You hold as South:

♠ K 10 7 5   ♥ A K   ♦ K 6 2   ♣ Q J 7 2

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	2♥	pass	2NT
pass	3♥ <sup>1</sup>	pass	?

1. Minimum.

In a worldwide matchpoint contest a number of years ago, I bid 3NT on this hand. Some people might disdain this bid at matchpoints, but I believe it is still an odds-on favorite to be right. Partner rates to have six hearts to the queen and an outside ace, even though

his 3♥ bid showed a minimum. The actual North hand was

♠ 9 ♥ Q 10 9 6 5 4 ♦ Q J 10 ♣ K 6 3

and 3NT made easily after West led a diamond from his six-card suit. A diamond lead beats 4♥, however.

SOLUTION 19

Both vul., IMPs. You hold as South:

♠ Q 6 5 2 ♥ J 8 6 5 2 ♦ 8 ♣ 6 3 2

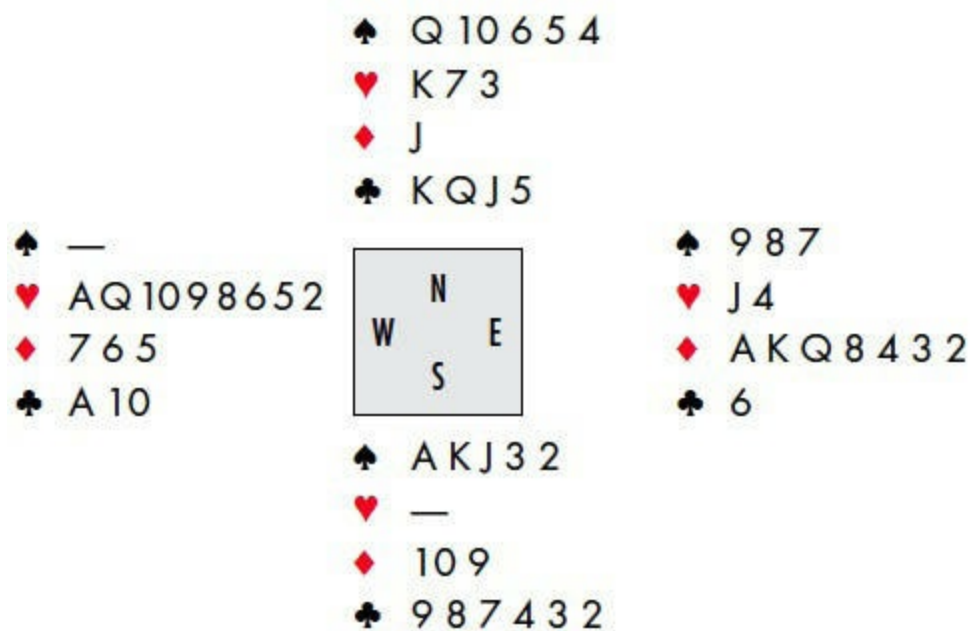
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♠	2♥	dbl*	?

I find this a very instructive hand with regard to how to handle this type of situation — a very weak hand with five-card support for partner.

Here is the full deal, from the final of the 1981 Spingold (hands rotated):







At the table, the bidding continued:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			pass
1hx	1♠	2♦	3♣
3♠	4♣	4♦	4♠
6♦	pass	pass	6♠
pass	pass	dbl	all pass

We gained 13 IMPs when the opponents with our cards failed to discover the double fit and sold out earlier.

# Chapter 2

# ASSUMPTIONS/MIND FLEXIBILITY

*Remember that your mind is like a parachute.....it functions only when open.*

— Sir Thomas Robert Dewar

In order to exercise effective decision-making during the auction there are many beneficial attributes, but only one that I consider a prerequisite — flexible thinking.

In all parts of our lives we often see something or somebody and make assumptions. A coworker ignores you as you pass each other in the hallway at work. You assume she is mad at you, when in fact she was deep in thought and didn't see you. A man staggering down the street is labeled a drunk, where in fact he has an inner ear disorder that affects his balance.

I retired recently and had made assumptions on how I would spend my days. I quickly discovered that my assumptions were invalid. After two months of retirement I thought about why things weren't as I anticipated, and analyzed whether this was a good development or a bad one, and what new assumptions I needed to embrace.

The assumptions you make are based on your life experiences. Quite often they are right, but often they blind you to other possibilities, or changing conditions.

Tip 1: To be successful at the bridge table, it is critical to incorporate new information and see whether earlier assumptions are still valid. If not, develop new ones that fit the current situation. Repeat this throughout the bidding and play.

You need to make certain assumptions whether defending, declaring or bidding. If partner leads an ace, and you lead the ace from ace-king, you assume he has the king — even though he might not. An opponent overcalls 2♣, and the assumption is that this is based on at least a five-card suit. That is well and good — for now. But you need to constantly challenge your assumptions, and be ready to modify your mindset.

When partner leads the ace, is there some indication that he doesn't have the king? Two possibilities that come to mind are:

- The suit was the only one not bid by the opponents and they stayed away from notrump, and
- The opponents have bid game and you have 13 HCP — not much room for partner

to hold another card.

Let's first look at an example on how to modify your assumptions during the bidding: Matchpoints, N-S vul., you hold as South:

♠ K 10 ♥ A K ♦ K Q J 7 5 3 ♣ J 8 6

I held this hand during the 2010 World Open Pairs (hands rotated). My first thoughts were:

*Tough hand to classify: 17 HCP with a good six-card suit. This hand is worth more than 17, therefore too strong to open/rebid a strong notrump.*

So I opened 1♦ and partner bid 1♠.

*Okay, now what — 2NT or 3♦? Playing matchpoints holding ♥AK I think 2NT is better.*

Now partner bid 3♥. This showed at least 5-4 with game-forcing values, and possibly slam aspirations.

Again I stopped to reevaluate my hand, and my earlier assumptions. I thought to myself:

*I don't like my hand any more. My diamonds are of dubious value, I only have 17 HCP, even though I promised 18-19, and I have minimum length in partner's suits. The heart length might be a plus, as are the 10 HCP in the majors, but partner will expect something in the majors from my hand. My choices are 3NT, 3♠ (encouraging) and 4♠ (discouraging).*

I bid 4♠. Partner reluctantly passed. His hand:

♠ A 8 7 6 4 3 ♥ Q J 9 2 ♦ — ♣ A 10 3

We stayed away from the dangerous five-level, and out of a poor slam.

On the above hand your partner's actions affected you. The following deal shows how you need to consider all players' bidding in this very competitive auction from a 1982 Regional in Fargo, ND. As above, I will add my thought process during the auction.

Playing teams with neither side vulnerable, I picked up as South

♠ 9 5 ♥ A K ♦ Q J 10 8 7 ♣ K J 10 8

I was sitting in fourth seat and the bidding started:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	1♥	1♠	?

*RHO got in his lead-directing bid, and the opponents are likely going to be silent during the rest of the auction.*

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	1♥	1♠	2♦ <sup>1</sup>
3♣	3♦	pass	?

1. Game-forcing.

What should I bid?

*The 3♣ bid is not good news. My ♣KJ may not be of any value, therefore both my offensive, as well my defensive values, are diminished. Being a passed hand, West will probably have some spade support.*

You decide that 3♥ comes closest to helping your side towards its best contract. It also has the advantage of keeping the bidding low, which will facilitate getting the most information to make later decisions. The bidding heats up:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	1♥	1♠	2♦
3♣	3♦	pass	3♥
4♠	5♦	5♠	?

What now?

*Okay, as I thought, LHO has spades, probably four of them. Partner has good diamonds, again at least four for his 5♦ bid. This confirms that we probably don't have a lot of defense besides our heart cards. LHO is short in the red suits.*

After East's 5♠ call you need to change your mindset on this hand once again.

*Whoa! Now East wants to bid more! Normally I would double with two spades, but I suspect partner might be short. Can they maybe even make 5♠? Not so sure, but it is close... let's pass and see what partner has in mind.*

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	1♥	1♠	2♦
3♣	3♦	pass	3♥
4♠	5♦	5♠	pass
pass	6♦	pass	pass
6♠	pass	pass	?

What is your action?

*Surely we can't make seven of anything. LHO's sequence strongly suggests the ♣AQ and a lot of black cards. Partner has shown a lot of red cards. I suspect 6♠ won't go down much — in fact, since partner did not want to double, maybe it won't go down at all. Partner is for sure short in spades, maybe void. For his bidding he probably has at least ten red cards. West also has at least ten cards in his two suits.*

*Is this a Pinochle deck? At least two or maybe all three other players are bidding a lot on distributional values. What is East's distribution? Ok, five spades, one or two clubs, a couple of diamonds, so something like 5=4=3=1*

*shape. At least. What about West? At a minimum  $5=1=2=5$ ? Or  $5=0=3=5$ ? So we now know that East has hearts. If West has a heart void,  $6\spadesuit$  is going to play well. How well? What are their losers? Spades — no. Hearts, none with a void. Diamonds, maybe one. Clubs — no, the finesse is onside if they need it.*

So the last stage in the metamorphosis of your thinking is roughly more of the paragraph above.

*Okay, for sure West has no hearts, with between one and three diamonds. If they have a 6-5 spade fit they may have thirteen tricks if we lead the wrong red suit. How do we do in 7♦? Not badly. Maybe lose a spade, and one or two clubs. For safety's sake I am going to bid 7♦.*

LHO doubles, which confirms your opinion of who has the ♣A. However, RHO runs to 7♠! You know this will be a huge disaster if they make it — undoubled, doubled or redoubled — so you double just in case partner might think a pass invites him to bid 7NT (he might have thought you bid 7♦ with the hope of making it).

Now for the full deal and what actually happened in this KO match (*I have* to tell you how this story ended):

♠ 10 8 7 6 4 3  
 ♥ —  
 ♦ 3 2  
 ♣ A Q 7 5 3

♠ —  
 ♥ Q J 9 8 7  
 ♦ A K 9 6 5  
 ♣ 9 6 2

♠ A K Q J 2  
 ♥ 10 6 5 4 3 2  
 ♦ 4  
 ♣ 4

♠ 9 5  
 ♥ A K  
 ♦ Q J 10 8 7  
 ♣ K J 10 8

N  
 W E  
 S

Any red suit lead defeats 7♠. A diamond lead, as it happens, cashes a winner. A heart lead endplays dummy at Trick 2 (if declarer uses a spade entry to the East hand to take

the club finesse he has only twelve tricks).

A trump lead allows the contract to be made with careful play: ♠A, club finesse, ♣A to pitch a diamond, diamond ruff low, heart ruff, diamond ruff, heart ruff, club ruff, heart ruff, club ruff, heart ruff; then draw the last trump with the ten, and cash the long club at Trick 13. A club lead (the only one that seems to merit no consideration) allows the contract to be made in a strange way — it provides an entry for the club finesse, even though declarer has a club. I led a heart and my partner and I earned a very hard-fought +100.

What do you think happened at the other table?

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	pass	1♥	2♦
pass	4♦	all pass	

The play went: ♣A, club ruff, heart ruff, club... Our East-West partners were -130. Since you are only +100 against 7♠ doubled, you lose 1 IMP!

Tip 2: Do not make automatic assumptions as to what will happen at the other table(s), or how well you will score. Quite often a little thing will dramatically affect the direction the bidding or play takes, and thus the results.

Neither vul., as South you hold:

♠ 3 ♥ A J 10 7 5 2 ♦ K 7 2 ♣ 8 5 2

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	1♦	1♠	2♥
4♠	5♦	pass	?

What do you bid?

Your 2♥ is a standard 2/1 promising 10+ HCP. Even partnerships that play 2/1 game-forcing usually play this bid as not 100% game-forcing. Your partner has potentially acted under some pressure and has the right to take your promised points into account when deciding how high to bid.



The decision is whether you should pass or bid 6♦. On the minus side you are a minimum — some would say a sub-minimum. And that was true when you initially responded. But you need to reevaluate your hand based on current information. You have a great hand! You have three diamonds opposite partner's likely seven-card suit. Why seven? Because you could be void in diamonds! If partner's diamonds are only six cards long, the suit will be close to solid. You also have the ♦K and the ♥A, both guaranteed tricks for partner. Finally, you have a singleton spade. Besides limiting your loss in that suit to one, there is a good chance that partner has two or three spades, and will be able to use your trumps to ruff these losers. So if partner has, for example

♠ x x x ♥ K x ♦ A Q J x x x x ♣ A

which should be close to a minimum, 6♦ is virtually cold.

The full deal, from the 2009 Bermuda Bowl match:

	♠ A 6	
	♥ K	
	♦ A Q 8 6 5 4 3	
	♣ A 6 4	
♠ Q 9 8 5 2		♠ K J 10 7 4
♥ 8 4 3		♥ Q 9 6
♦ 9		♦ J 10
♣ 10 9 7 3		♣ K Q J
	<div> <div>N</div> <div>W      E</div> <div>S</div> </div>	
	♠ 3	
	♥ A J 10 7 5 2	
	♦ K 7 2	
	♣ 8 5 2	

12 IMPs were lost when South passed 5♦ and the slam was bid at the other table. I do not like to criticize one of the very best players in the world, but I feel strongly about this deal.

There are three more tips that apply to this example:

Tip 3: Try to visualize what partner will have for his bid.

This is how we came up with the probable best call.

Tip 4: When the opponents preempt, you have less room, therefore you should give partner some slack. However, often partner has a much better hand, having given you some leeway.

Tip 5: Constantly reevaluate your hand.

Here your minimum turned into a mountain!

Here is a hand where, with correct thinking, it should be fairly simple to find the best solution:

Sitting South, N-S vul., you hold

♠ A Q 9 8 6 4 2 ♥ 7 ♦ 5 3 ♣ A Q 2

The bidding starts off:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
2NT <sup>1</sup>	3♣ <sup>2</sup>	pass dbl <sup>3</sup>	1♠ ?

1. Minors.
2. Limit raise in spades.
3. Lead directing.

You started off with a potentially great playing strength hand, and it has become as good as it gets! LHO has the minors and RHO has asked for a club lead. Partner has at least three spades. If partner has the ♦A or ♦K and one other keycard, slam should be almost cold. Even without the ♠K it rates to be on. So don't bid a lazy 4♠ — cuebid.

Our bidding continued:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		pass	1♠
2NT	3♣	dbl	4♣
pass	4♥	pass	5♣
pass	6♣	all pass	

Partner held

♠ K 5 3 ♥ A 8 6 5 2 ♦ K 9 2 ♣ 4 3

With the ♣K and ♦A onside, the slam made easily. Please note that without the opponents' descriptive bidding, we would have stayed out of the 25% slam. However with their help the slam was a 99% certainty (see the next chapter for more on situations where your competitive bidding is likely to be counterproductive).

The above hand is an example of being open to the signs of things getting rosier. The opposite can happen as well, as long as you are ready for it. On the next hand, from the final of the 2010 World Open Pairs in Philadelphia, I wasn't.

Neither vul., matchpoints, you hold

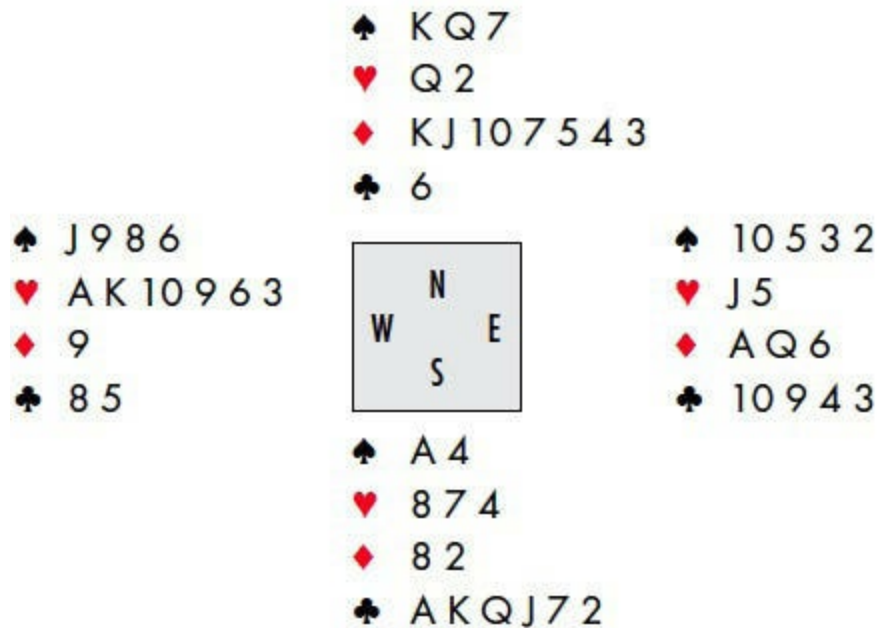
♠ A 4 ♥ 8 7 4 ♦ 8 2 ♣ A K Q J 7 2

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
Zia	Gohl	Rodwell	Kimelman
		pass	1♣
2♥	3♦	pass	3♥
pass	4♦	pass	?

The bidding started off well. My 3♥ asked partner for a stopper, and implied a hand like the one I held. Over 4♦ I bid a quick 5♣ — and then started thinking.

*Partner's 3♦ in competition can be made on as little as 10 HCP (or less). Partner did not support clubs, and did not cuebid hearts or support clubs, or jump in diamonds. Ergo, we have two heart losers (Rodwell didn't support) and at least one diamond loser. Plus, any diamond honors are likely to be offside.*

The good news — my thinking was sound. The bad news — my timing sucked! The full deal (hands rotated):



There is another lesson here. The reason I got this decision wrong was that I was still thinking about the previous board. On that one we had stopped in a super 3♦ contract, but I went down when I should have made it.

Tip 6: In order to have mind flexibility you have to be ‘present’ or ‘in the moment’. For this reason I tell my partners (and myself):

- Forget about the previous board until after the session.
- Don’t have any discussions on any topic during the session.

Quite often you instinctively know when things do not add up. Your brain is trying to tell you ALERT, ALERT. That is the time to stop and look at your assumptions and look at the auction to see if there any clues that you missed the first time around. And usually there are indicators as to which of the other three players at the table may not have what you initially thought. Here is a much harder problem, as hard as they get, but solvable with an open mind and trust in partner:

You are South, both vul., playing IMPs and pick up:

♠ K 4 ♥ K Q 3 ♦ Q 9 8 7 4 2 ♣ Q 4

The bidding goes:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1♦ <sup>1</sup>
1♠	pass	2♦ <sup>2</sup>	pass
2♥ <sup>3</sup>	3♦	3♠	pass
pass	dbl	4♣	pass
pass	dbl	pass	?

1. Playing a 12-14 NT system.
2. Transfer showing at least five hearts and at least 5 HCP.
3. Promises two-plus hearts.

*What do you think partner has, and what do you bid?*

The first thing you are quite sure of is that partner has spades. He passed 1♠ and then doubled 3♠. Partner has moderate diamond support, probably three of them.

*Why?*

Playing a weak notrump, you have shown either a minimum distributional hand, or a balanced hand with at least 15 HCP. Partner has rightly assumed you have the former, with at least five diamonds.

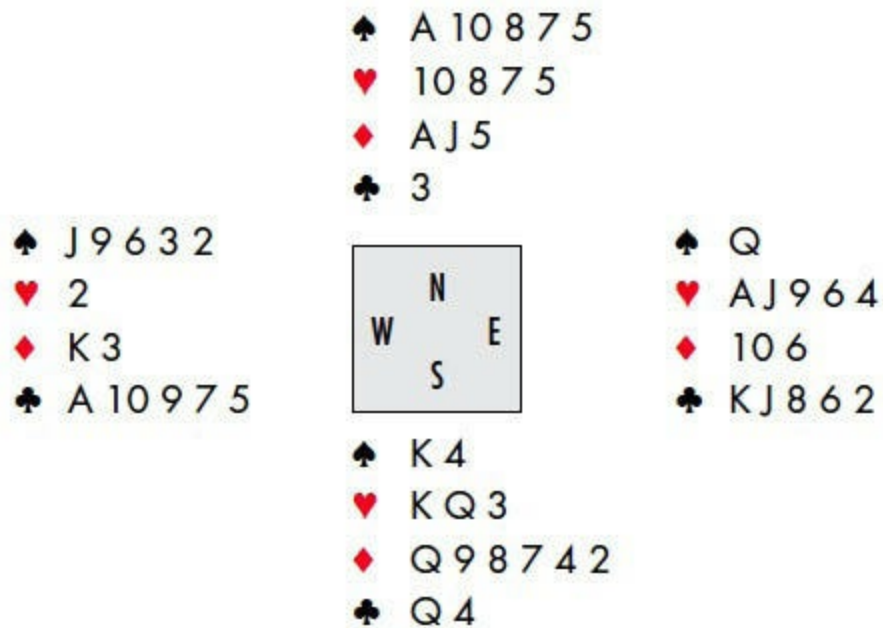
*What about partner's points?*

Probably 7-10 HCP range. You deduce this as they did not take stronger action, but still competed to the three-level, vulnerable.

*So if partner has five spades and three diamonds, what is the rest of his distribution?*

Likely three hearts and two clubs. Again, the bidding tells you the opponents do not have an eight-card heart fit. LHO probably has two and RHO did not rebid hearts knowing this, so must only have a five-card suit. Also, partner did not make a negative double. Therefore the opponents have found (luckily!) at least a nine-card club fit and partner is trying to involve you in the decision instead of unilaterally passing or bidding 4♦. Bid 4♦, instead of blindly passing the double, as was done at the table.

The full deal:



On this deal the opponents' bidding was suspect, which is why you must trust partner!

## OUT OF THE FRYING PAN INTO THE FIRE

One common assumption occurs when partner bids and gets doubled for penalty. Players panic when they do not have much to help partner and they assume one of their suits will play better than partner's. This is usually wrong, so let me try, with the help of an example, to improve your success rate in these situations.

IMPs, E-W vul., you hold as South:

♠ 9   ♥ 2   ♦ J 9 8 7 4   ♣ J 10 8 7 5 3			
<b>WEST</b>	<b>NORTH</b>	<b>EAST</b>	<b>SOUTH</b>
		1NT	pass
4♦ <sup>1</sup>	4♠	dbl	?

1. Texas transfer.

The only good thing about the hand is the vulnerability!

*Should you pull?*

No! Partner said ‘I want to play in 4♠’. Okay, does he have ten solid spades? Probably not (although I did see that happen in a Sioux Falls Regional in 1978 — I doubled a 4♠ overcall after partner had opened. I had 13 HCP, partner had 14 and RHO had 10 HCP — all in his ten-card spade suit!).

*How many spades does partner have?*

I would guess seven. He might have six, but could easily have eight.

*A key question — how many hearts does partner have?*

LHO has promised 6+ and RHO has doubled 4♠, which usually indicates a doubleton heart. So partner rates to have at least three hearts, quite possibly four.

*How many minor-suit cards does partner have?*

On an average two or three. Now do you want to play in a minor?

Partner’s hand was

♠ A K J 10 8 7 ♥ A 10 7 4 ♦ 3 2 ♣ 9

In the 2009 D’Orsi Seniors Bowl, South bid 4NT for the minors, and ended up playing in 5♦. Where would you rather play, 4♠ or 5♦?

As often is the case, we need to be constantly thinking and processing information. We need to ask ourselves the right questions to come up with the right solution for the actual situation. This is true when we are trying to decide whether to preempt, and if so, how high? We will tackle this question, as well as look at how to deal with the opponents’ preempts, in Chapter 3.

# Chapter 3



# PREEMPTIVE BIDDING

This is an area that I covered briefly in my first book; however, I want to revisit it in more detail in this chapter.

# WHEN TO PREEMPT

*Preempts work.* It is hard to bid as accurately when bidding space has been taken away. The opponents can't use their fancy gadgets with which they are very comfortable. They have to describe more hands with fewer choices. But before jumping into the fray, there are certain questions you should ask yourself:

- What am I accomplishing?
- Who am I helping?
- Am I encouraging partner to sacrifice, when I really don't want to?
- Am I giving the opponents an easy option of doubling or bidding on?

Quite often one preempts the auction with a general purpose in mind: 'I want to take away the opponents' bidding space', or 'I want to suggest a sacrifice.' Ask yourself, 'If I make this bid, am I achieving one of these goals? What is the downside of this bid? Does the downside outweigh the practical effect of achieving my original goals?'

Tip 7: Be disciplined within your partnership's agreed preempting style, whatever it may be.

Some players believe in the standard approach to preemption. For them, an example of a not vulnerable preempt might be

♠ 10 3 2 ♥ 2 ♦ K Q 10 9 5 4 3 ♣ 4 2

whereas vulnerable this is a typical hand:

♠ A 3 2 ♥ 2 ♦ K Q 10 9 5 4 3 ♣ 4 2

However, that is far from the current style in high-level competitive bridge. Today, as the old song puts it, anything goes. Here are two examples from top-level play of light preempts that would cause traditionalists to shiver from fright:

In the 2009 Bermuda Bowl, Lindqvist for Sweden opened a multi 2♦ on

♠ 10 8 6 ♥ J 10 9 8 6 ♦ 8 5 2 ♣ Q 5

In the same event, at favorable colors, Gromov for Russia held:

♠ 3 ♥ 9 6 5 4 3 2 ♦ J 10 5 ♣ 9 4 3

Obviously he felt this was too strong for 2♥, so he opened 3♥! The full deal and the rest of the bidding (hands rotated):

		♠ Q 6 5		
		♥ 8		
		♦ Q 9 8 7 4		
		♣ A 10 7 5		
♠ K J 10 4		<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> <span>N</span><span>E</span> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> <span>W</span><span>S</span> </div> </div>	♠ A 9 8 7 2	
♥ A Q J 10			♥ K 7	
♦ K 6 2			♦ A 3	
♣ Q 8			♣ K J 6 2	
		♠ 3		
		♥ 9 6 5 4 3 2		
		♦ J 10 5		
		♣ 9 4 3		
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	
3NT	pass	4♥ <sup>1</sup>	3♥	
4♠	pass	4NT	pass	
			all pass	

1. Transfer.

The opponents missed the makeable slam, so on this one deal the preempt worked. However, I am sure West would have found the ♠Q had he been in 6♠. At the other table

there was no enemy interference; East-West easily bid the slam, but went down when declarer failed to find the trump queen.

Tip 8: Preempts are most effective when the opponents have not yet exchanged any information about their hands.

In the above two examples the preemptor was in the perfect position — dealer at favorable vulnerability.

In the 2007 Bermuda Bowl round robin match between Italy and Norway, both sides vulnerable, Helness and Lauria each opened 3♥ on

♠ Q 3 ♥ A Q 9 7 6 4 2 ♦ 4 ♣ 8 6 3

Their thinking was something like, ‘I know this is a bit dangerous because my suit quality is poor, but it is worth the risk to take away the opponents’ bidding space.’

The situation isn’t as good when you are in second seat and the dealer has passed. Now there is a 50-50 chance that you are preempting partner. In this seat I personally like to have very close to what my partnership’s preempting style indicates. Third seat is better than second, but not as good as first seat. There are two passed hands ahead of you. If you are weak then LHO is likely to be strong, and you want to take away their bidding space.

You will not be successful by preempting with any type of hand with a long suit. I strongly agree with the notion that you should not hold many high cards outside of the trump suit. One is usually my limit. This is especially true of quacks and kings as they contribute few tricks on offense, but are often valuable on defense. One of the worst things is to take a sacrifice and find out the opponents cannot make the game they bid. So let’s test your preempting IQ and see how well you would have fared in real life (I realize that this quiz is a bit tainted since partnership style is a big factor):

## QUIZ

In each case, you are South, in first seat. What do you bid?

1. E-W vul. ♠ Q 8 7 6 4 3 ♥ A ♦ Q 6 4 ♣ 10 8 6
2. E-W vul. ♠ J 10 9 2 ♥ 5 3 ♦ 9 ♣ K Q J 9 8 5

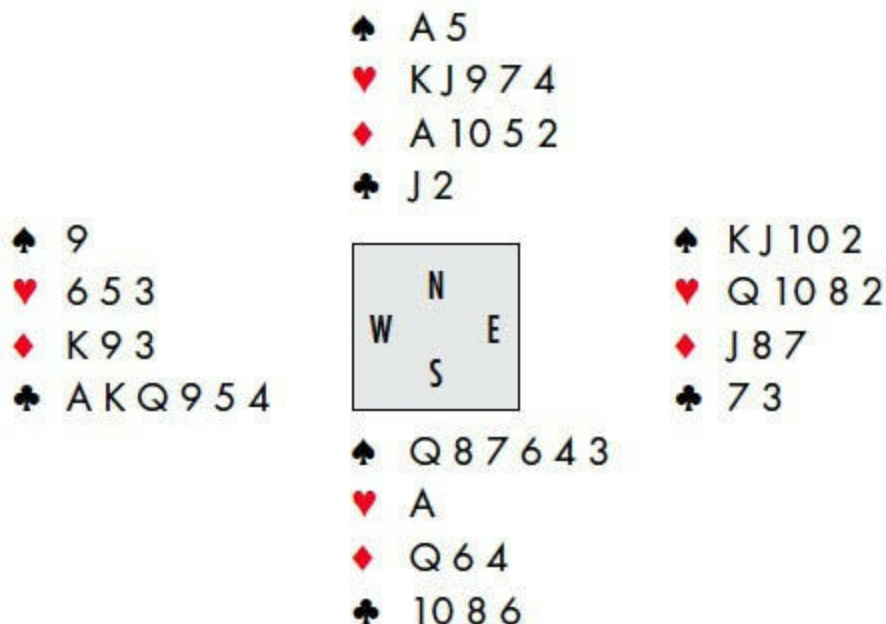
3. Both vul. ♠ A K Q 10 6 3 ♥ 10 8 3 ♦ Q 2 ♣ 4 3
4. Neither vul. ♠ A 9 8 7 3 2 ♥ 8 7 ♦ K 10 4 ♣ 9 2

## SOLUTIONS TO PREEMPTING QUIZ

1. E-W vul. ♠ Q 8 7 6 4 3 ♥ A ♦ Q 6 4 ♣ 10 8 6

The plus is that you are in first seat at favorable vulnerability. However there are two downsides to this hand. First, your suit is poor. More serious, in my view, is that you have two defensive cards. I think pass is right in theory, and indeed it was in practice (hands rotated):

2009 D'Orsi Senior Bowl

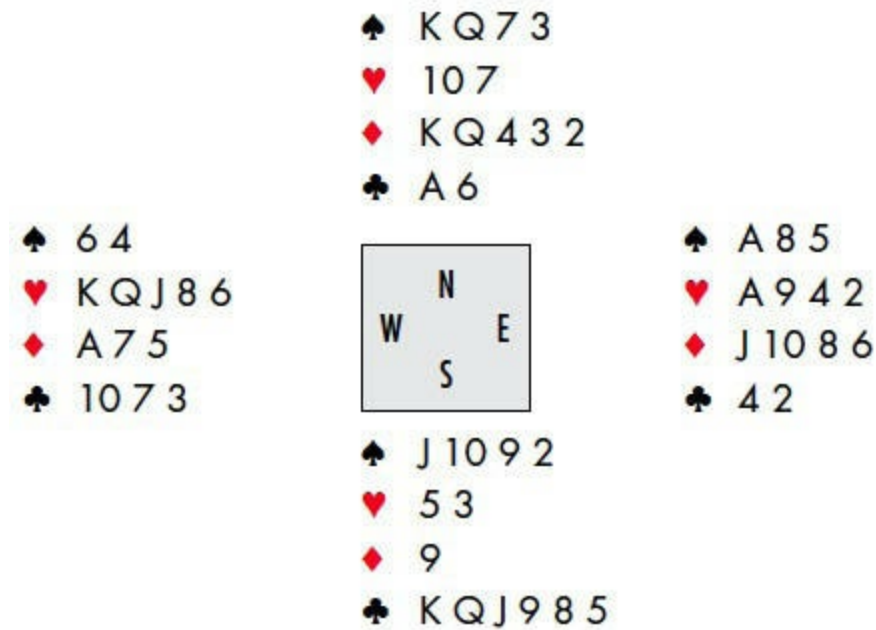


WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
3♣	4♠	dbl	2♠ all pass

Bidding 4♠ was aggressive, but reasonable. However, it went down three for -500, and a big loss, on a deal where the high cards were divided 21-19.

2. E-W vul. ♠ J 10 9 2 ♥ 5 3 ♦ 9 ♣ K Q J 9 8 5

Here you have a great six-card suit, and no defense outside your suit. One taboo has always been don't preempt with a side four-card major suit. This feature would not stop me from preempting if other factors were favorable. There is risk, but I like Zia's opening bid of 3♣ in Round 8 of the 2010 Rosenblum Cup, although he did get a bit lucky (hands rotated):



Everyone else passed, so 3♣ became the final contract, making for a 7 IMP gain when his teammates bought the hand for 3♥, making as well. But if Zia's red-suit holdings had been reversed, 4♠ would have been cold.

3. Both vul. ♠ A K Q 10 6 3 ♥ 10 8 3 ♦ Q 2 ♣ 4 3

I would open this hand 1♠. If your style is to open this hand 2♠, okay, but even then it is hard for partner to take sensible action when the range is so wide. This is exactly what happened in the 2009 Life Master Pairs to a very highly regarded partnership: North passed the 2♠ opening with

♠ 7 4 ♥ A K Q 4 ♦ A K 8 7 6 5 ♣ 9

for a below average score.

4. Neither vul. ♠ A 9 8 7 3 2 ♥ 8 7 ♦ K 10 4 ♣ 9 2

You have a decent suit with only one outside high card. This is a good weak two in my book. Why do I even have this hand in here?

It is here because of what happened in one match in the 2009 Venice Cup. North passed the 2♠ opener with

♠ K J 5 4 ♥ A K Q ♦ 9 8 2 ♣ J 8 3

Admittedly, this is a very deep position given that you have nine top tricks when partner has as little as:

♠ A 8 7 6 3 2 ♥ 4 3 2 ♦ 4 3 ♣ 4 2

On the actual deal, they lost 10 IMPs when the ♦A was onside and 4♠ was bid at the other table. I would have been sorely tempted to shoot out 3NT as North, although that would have been unsuccessful on this deal.

Tip 9: Another rule I and many others use: Do not open a preempt with two aces. The reason is that partner, when deciding how high to bid, will never place you with two guaranteed defensive tricks.

One type of preempt that has come into vogue is the hand where traditional values and suit length are replaced by extreme distribution, such as 6-5. One such hand from the 2010 McConnell Cup was

♠ A K Q 9 6 2 ♥ 10 9 6 5 3 ♦ 2 ♣ 8

In first seat, one player opened 3♠ with neither side vulnerable. To me this is just rolling

the dice. You might be missing a slam in hearts and end up playing right here in 3♠. I have a little more sympathy for this one:

♠ 5 ♥ 2 ♦ 10 8 7 5 2 ♣ K Q J 8 6 3

In the 2010 Rosenblum Cup, with neither side vulnerable, one South opened 3♣ in first seat. At least he had a good suit, and no defense.

Tip 10: Think twice before preempting vulnerable against not, as there is only a very small chance you will find a worthwhile sacrifice, while you are giving the opponents information and making it much easier to place cards and read the distribution. If you do preempt vulnerable, you should have a good hand, especially vulnerable against not.

In the 2010 Rosenblum, Jeff Meckstroth held in first seat:

♠ — ♥ Q 8 5 ♦ J 10 8 7 6 4 3 2 ♣ 9 4

...and never took a call! Yes, he was vulnerable against not. The opponents bid to a normal game which went one down.

In the 2009 D'Orsi Seniors Bowl, N-S vul., South held:

♠ K ♥ 8 ♦ Q J 10 8 7 6 4 2 ♣ J 5 2

At one table it went:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	pass	1NT	3♦

At the other table:



WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♠	pass	2♥	pass

The full deal (hands rotated):

	♠ 8 7 4 2	
	♥ K J 4 2	
	♦ 5 3	
	♣ K Q 7	
♠ Q 10 9 6 3	W N E	♠ A J 5
♥ A 10 9	S	♥ Q 7 6 5 3
♦ A		♦ K 9
♣ 9 8 6 4		♣ A 10 3
	♠ K	
	♥ 8	
	♦ Q J 10 8 7 6 4 2	
	♣ J 5 2	

At both tables, East-West played four of a major. Only the declarer who had heard the helpful 3♦ bid was able to guess hearts and make his game.

Tip 11: When preempting, remember to ask yourself ‘Is this action going to be more helpful or hurtful in the long run? Am I encouraging partner to sacrifice, when I really don’t want to?’

Tip 12: Once you preempt your partner becomes the captain of your team. This means that any further bidding decisions will rest with him. This is discipline. I have two exceptions to this rule:

- When I preempt with extreme distribution (6-6, 7-5 or 7-6).
- When I double for penalties (see Chapter 8).

IF I SACRIFICE AND THEY BID ON, DO I KNOW WHAT TO DO?

Preempting can be a very effective tool. There is a lot of pressure on the opponents, especially when their hand type and high cards don't exactly fit into the bidding situation they are facing. This forces them either to underbid or to overbid. Because of that, successful players will give their partners some slack in auctions where bidding space has been stolen. However, if pushed, they will bid one more 'for luck'.

So what I am suggesting is that, as the preempting side, you be content with your success in making the opponents' lives difficult; don't press your luck unless you 'know' that they cannot make the slam that you are pushing them to bid.

The following is an example of *not* bidding one more if you don't know what to do when the opponents, who had previously stopped at the five-level, now bid a small slam.

This is a deal that was written up often, and exemplifies this rule being broken, and more than once. It came up in Sao Paulo in the 2009 World Championships:

E-W vul.

♠ J

♥ A J 7 4

♦ A 9 8 4

♣ 9 6 5 4

♠ K Q 10 8 7 6 5 4 3

♥ 10

♦ 3 2

♣ 2

♠ A

♥ K 8 6 2

♦ K J

♣ A K Q J 8 7

W N E

S

♠ 9 2

♥ Q 9 5 3

♦ Q 10 7 6 5

♣ 10 3

First, from the Bermuda Bowl. This auction is exactly how I think the bidding should go on this deal:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
6♣	4♠ pass	5♣ pass	pass pass

South was the captain. For all he knew, the opponents could make seven, so he wisely chose to pass throughout. North respected his partner's role as captain of bidding decisions, once he had described his hand, and passed 6♣. Some of the other auctions on this deal were not as nice.

First let's go to the other table in the same match:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	4♠	5♣	pass
6♣	6♠	dbl	all pass

With first-round control East should pass 6♠, but that is a subject for a different book. North has no clue whether 6♣ is going down or 7♣ is making — he should just pass over 6♣. Maybe partner is about to double!

In the Venice Cup, one pair nicely duplicated my preferred bidding. However, in my opinion, the worst bid made on this deal took place at the other table in the same match, where North could have passed out 5♣ but chose not to do so:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	4♠	dbl	pass
4NT	pass	5♣	pass
pass	5♠	6♣	all pass

Tip 13: Stay within the discipline of your partnership's agreements. Even if you get a good result, partner will ever after have in the back of his mind that you may be doing it again.

# WHEN AND HOW TO RAISE PARTNER'S PREEMPT

Quite often you find yourself with big support for partner. These guidelines apply equally whether partner has preempted or has simply overcalled or opened. The automatic reaction is to raise partner's suit. This is good thinking, and will usually make partner happy — at least initially. But you need to ask yourself certain questions before coming in:

- Who am I helping by bidding?
- Am I pushing partner to make a poor decision?
- Am I giving the opponents the easy option of taking a penalty, when they are not sure how high to bid or what suit to be in?

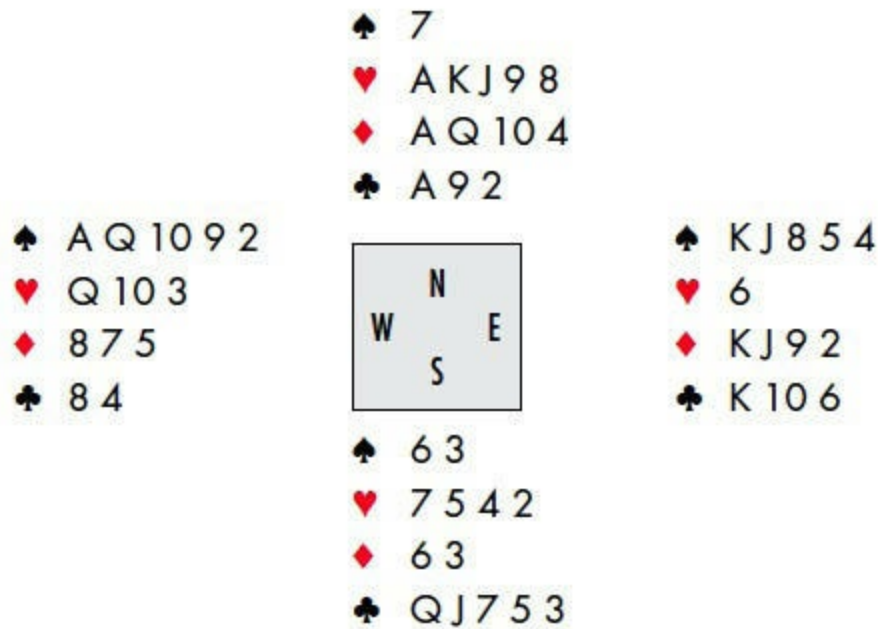
## WHO AM I HELPING BY BIDDING?

Good opponents listen carefully if the partner of the preemptor raises. This will give them clues, not only to their partner's length in the opponents' long suit, but also to the high card distribution in the other three hands. By raising partner you often make the opponents' lives easier, as well as give them a blueprint as to how to play the contract that they reach.

2007 World Championships, N-S vul. As South you hold

♠ 6 3   ♥ 7 5 4 2   ♦ 6 3   ♣ Q J 7 5 3			
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	1♥	1♠	pass ?

Partner has opened the bidding, but you have very little. Do you bid a preemptive 3♥? If not, what will you do? Here is the full deal, and what happened at the two tables in this match:



WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	1♥	1♠	pass
3♥	dbl	redbl	pass
3♠	all pass		pass

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	1♥	1♠	pass
4♠	dbl	all pass	2♥

Once South raises hearts, West has the information he needs to bid aggressively to 4♠. It is a two-way shot: either he can make game if partner has a good hand, or the opponents can make game and 4♠ is a good sacrifice. On this deal 4♠ is a lucky make, but 4♥ would likely make as well!

N-S vul., IMPs. As South you hold:

♠ 6 ♥ KJ 10 8 7 2 ♦ 5 4 3 ♣ Q 5 3

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♠	pass	2NT <sup>1</sup>	pass
3♥	dbl	4♣	?

1. Jacoby.

At a local Sectional, South bid 5♥, which went pass, pass, 5♠, pass 6♠. The full deal:

	♠ 5 4	
	♥ A Q 9 6	
	♦ J 6	
	♣ 10 8 7 6 4	
♠ K J 9 3 2		♠ A Q 10 8 7
♥ 4		♥ 5 3
♦ A 10 9 2		♦ K Q 8 7
♣ A J 9		♣ K 2
	♠ 6	
	♥ K J 10 8 7 2	
	♦ 5 4 3	
	♣ Q 5 3	

Yes, bidding 5♥ took away Blackwood, but it also propelled East-West into the cold slam. I am fairly sure that had South passed, West would have bid 4♠, which would have ended the auction.

## WEAK JUMP RAISES AND JUMP OVERCALLS

Did you notice in the second last example that South raised to 2♥, not 3♥? The reason was that a raise to 2♥ is more ambiguous in terms of high cards and distribution. He decided he would rather slightly mislead partner than give too much information to the opponents, who would likely be declaring the hand. This is a very important principle in my view. Here are a couple more examples, but in slightly different contexts:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
<i>Kranyak</i>	<i>Kimelman</i>	<i>Feldman</i>	<i>Gohl</i>
1♣	1♠	dbl	3♠
4♥	all pass		

South's hand in my view is closer to a limit raise than a preemptive one, and I will come back to this hand in Chapter 10. In general, I do not like weak jump raises as they are too damaging in terms of information provided when you end up on defense, which is most of the time.

As South with N-S vul. at IMPs, you hold:



♠ A J 10 9 6 3 2 ♥ Q 8 2 ♦ Q ♣ 9 4

East opens 1♣ — and you? You have a good seven-card suit. Your queens are not an asset on offense. Just as important, they are likely assets on defense. I think the clear, easy bid is 1♠ and then you can listen to what happens afterward. In the 2010 Rosenblum, a multiple world champion bid 3♠! Partner bid an aggressive 4♠ on

♠ K 7 ♥ 10 9 6 ♦ K J 10 6 2 ♣ J 10 5

and was doubled for -500. Obviously partner expected more for 3♠ (remember, vulnerable preempts show a good hand and a good long suit). All the opponents could make was a partscore.

In general, I think making jump overcalls vulnerable is another losing tactic. You are telling the opponents that you have a six-card suit *and* some high cards. Now they are more likely to try and penalize you since the more high cards you have, the less chance of their making a game. To repeat myself, with this type of hand overcall at the one-level. Here is one more example that occurred during a recent practice session:

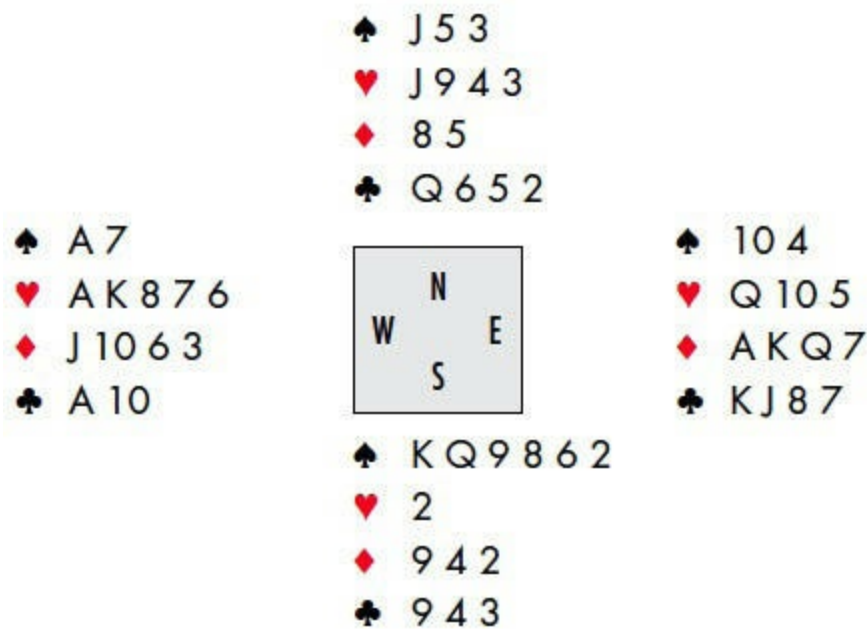
As South with E-W vul., IMPs, I held:

♠ K Q 9 8 6 2 ♥ 2 ♦ 9 4 2 ♣ 9 4 3

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	pass	1♣	?

I overcalled only 1♠ despite the favorable vulnerability. East-West bid up to 6♥ and I led the ♠K. The full deal:





Declarer misguessed hearts and then played me, the overcaller with short hearts, for the ♣Q and went down two. I am 100% sure that had I made a jump overcall he would have guessed clubs, and might have got hearts right as well.

Tip 14: When you read about great declarer plays, it is always when the opponents have made bids, often preempts. Think twice before giving up this information.

## AM I PUSHING PARTNER TO MAKE A POOR DECISION?

You want to describe your hand so partner knows what to do. You want to ensure that your hand matches your bid. If you make an invitational bid with enough values for game, it should not come as a surprise when you score poorly any time partner passes your invitation.

In preemptive situations this can happen as well. Quite often partner will have to make a high-level decision in a competitive auction, and will be weighing heavily the information that you have supplied. Make sure it is what you want partner to know about your hand! Look at this problem from a 2011 Winnipeg Sectional.

Playing matchpoints, with East-West vulnerable, you hold as South

♠ K Q 7 4 ♥ 8 6 4 ♦ 10 8 5 ♣ 9 8 4

Partner opens 1♥ and East doubles. Well?

It seems automatic to bid 2♥. You have 5 HCP, three-card support, and maybe you can take away some valuable bidding space from the opponents. But wait! Is this a deal on which you want partner to bid hearts at a high level?

No! So pass. You may still get a chance to bid hearts later. This was the complete deal (hands rotated):

♠ J 10 9 6 5	♠ —	♠ A 8 3 2
♥ 2	♥ Q J 10 7 5 3	♥ A K 9
♦ 4 2	♦ A Q J 6	♦ K 9 7 3
♣ A K 6 3 2	♣ 10 7 5	♣ Q J
	<div>W N E S</div>	
	♠ K Q 7 4	
	♥ 8 6 4	
	♦ 10 8 5	
	♣ 9 8 4	

At the table South did bid 2♥, and I later unsuccessfully sacrificed in 5♥, for -800. When partner raises, I expect him to have more than zero points to contribute to offense.

AM I GIVING THE OPPONENTS THE EASY OPTION OF TAKING A PENALTY, WHEN THEY ARE NOT SURE HOW HIGH TO BID OR WHAT SUIT TO BE IN?

This happens frequently. Your side preempts. The opponents start groping and guessing whether partner was overbidding or underbidding. Does partner have one suit or two? Do they have length or shortness in the preempt suit? So the preempting side needs to exercise a lot of judgment when trying to decide when to bid more and when to let the opponents try to find the right suit and level by themselves. What factors should be considered?

Obviously the first one is defensive values. Aces and kings are obvious, but holdings such as 10765 or J872 can be deadly in a high-level contract, especially if this is the trump suit. Another consideration is holdings such as Qx or a singleton king, which could easily take a trick on defense. A void in their suit can be a sign that it is

breaking poorly: partner may have four or even five cards in their trump suit.

Here is an instructive example from a 2011 CNTC match, in which I was North.

N-S vul., IMPs.		<p>♠ 7 4</p> <p>♥ A Q 8 5 4</p> <p>♦ A K J 5</p> <p>♣ K 5</p>	
<p>♠ Q 10 6 5</p> <p>♥ 10 7</p> <p>♦ 7 3 2</p> <p>♣ J 9 7 2</p>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> <p style="text-align: center;">N</p> <p style="text-align: center;">W      E</p> <p style="text-align: center;">S</p> </div> <p>♠ A J 9 3 2</p> <p>♥ J 6 3 2</p> <p>♦ 8 4</p> <p>♣ 6 3</p>	<p>♠ K 8</p> <p>♥ K 9</p> <p>♦ Q 10 9 6</p> <p>♣ A Q 10 8 4</p>	
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♥	2♣	2NT <sup>1</sup>
4♣	4♦	5♣	dbl
all pass			

### 1. Four-plus hearts, limit raise or better.

Partner decided to upgrade his hand to a limit raise. I have no problem with West's preemptive raise — near to classic. We play my 4♦ in this situation as somewhat ambiguous, a hand that may not be a full value slam try. Initially it is natural, with the primary purpose of helping partner judge whether his values are working (for more on this subject see Chapters 4 and 10).

East's 5♣ was a terrible bid in my opinion. First, the opponents have already exchanged a lot of information. Second, his strong defensive hand, including ♦Q1096, should warn him that hearts will not play well and even game may be going down North-South. South mentally said 'Thank you, sir', and doubled. East-West went down four in 5♣ for 800 (declarer misguessed clubs after we got a diamond ruff). In theory 4♥ is cold double-dummy, but many declarers went down on a spade lead.

Tip 15: Any time that the opponents give you an easy way out, especially at teams, thank them and take the sure plus.

# MISCELLANEOUS PREEMPTS

## PREEMPTING AFTER YOU OPEN THE BIDDING

This comes up when the opponents get into the bidding after you have opened, and RHO makes a double. The double could be cards, a support double, or anything. Now you jump, either in your first suit or in a new suit. The key to knowing your jump is based on playing strength and not high-card strength is that with the latter you would (should) always redouble.

Playing matchpoints, neither vul., you hold as West:

♠ Q 4
♥ —
♦ A 7 6 5
♣ K Q 10 9 7 5 3

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
<i>Kimelman</i>		<i>Gohl</i>	
1♣	pass	1♥	dbl
3♣	pass	pass	3♦
all pass			

The full deal from a 2011 Winnipeg Sectional (hands rotated):

	♠ 10 6 5 2	
	♥ A 8 4 3	
	♦ 9 3	
	♣ 8 6 4	
♠ Q 4		♠ 9 7 3
♥ —		♥ Q 10 9 7 5 2
♦ A 7 6 5		♦ 10 4
♣ K Q 10 9 7 5 3		♣ J 2
	<div> <div> <div></div> <div>N</div> <div>W</div> <div>S</div> <div>E</div> </div> </div>	
	♠ A K J 8	
	♥ K J 6	
	♦ K Q J 8 2	
	♣ A	

As you can see, the opponents missed an easy game.

# THE REVERSE PREEMPT

The primary purpose of preempting is to make things as difficult as possible for the opponents to bid constructively, by taking away their space. A secondary purpose is to describe your hand to partner. When partner is a passed hand, and you have weakness, it may be clear that the opponents have a game or slam. In that case, instead of preempting, quite often you can accomplish your goal by making a regular overcall with a hand weaker than the strength expected. I was first exposed to this strategy by Allan Graves, who sat North against me on this deal in the 2003 CNTC:

E-W vul., IMPs		♠ 10 5 4 2 ♥ 10 7 ♦ — ♣ K Q J 9 8 6 5	
♠ A Q J 7 ♥ A J 8 5 ♦ A 8 4 ♣ 7 2	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; width: fit-content; margin: auto;"> <div style="text-align: center;">N</div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"><div>W</div><div>E</div></div> <div style="text-align: center;">S</div> </div>	♠ K 9 3 ♥ K Q ♦ Q J 10 6 5 3 ♣ A 4	
	♠ 8 6 ♥ 9 6 4 3 2 ♦ K 9 7 2 ♣ 10 3		

---

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	pass	1♦	pass
1♥	2♣!		

Placing North with more values, we didn't come close to bidding a slam. However, I put the lesson to good use later on the following deal, where I was South.

Matchpoints, E-W vul.

♠ A K 9 8 5 3  
♥ A J 4  
♦ 8 3  
♣ J 9

♠ 7 6  
♥ 9 6  
♦ J 10 9 7 6 5  
♣ A 3 2



♠ Q 10  
♥ Q 10 8 5 3 2  
♦ A K Q 2  
♣ 7

♠ J 4 2  
♥ K 7  
♦ 4  
♣ K Q 10 8 6 5 4

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	pass	1♥	2♣!
2♣	3♣	3♦	pass
4♥	pass	pass	5♣
dbl	all pass		

We got a 98% score for -500, but -680 would have been well above average as many pairs bid this decent slam. It was tough at our table because both opponents thought we had to have more values for our bidding!

# BIDDING WHEN THE OPPONENTS PREEMPT

When you bid over a preempt, often your hand is not perfect for the bid you choose. The reason, of course, is that you have fewer choices. It's not easy, especially when they bid at the three-, four- and five-levels. However, here are some useful principles. These, together with the lessons of experience (your own or others'), can help neutralize the opponents' obstructive bidding. I will briefly look at this subject now, and revisit it in more detail when I discuss takeout doubles in Chapters 7 and 8.

## BIDDING A SUIT OVER A WEAK TWO

When the opponents open a weak two you can overcall at the two-, three- and four-levels. What are the meanings of these different actions?

Let's say that RHO opens in first seat with 2♥. An overcall of 2♠ by you is a natural bid, perhaps as little as a decent five-card suit with an opening bid. Vulnerable, at teams, the suit should be better. A jump to 3♠ is a strong bid, with good high cards and a good suit, at least six cards in length. For example, I would bid 3♠ with

♠ A Q 10 9 8 5 2 ♥ A ♦ K Q 2 ♣ A 2

The difference between jumping to 3♠, and doubling and then bidding spades, is that the latter sequence shows more convertible values, such as:

♠ A Q 9 8 5 2 ♥ J ♦ K Q 2 ♣ A K 2

This hand is not quite so focused on playing in spades.

Finally, a jump to 4♠ over 2♥ says 'I want to play there'. Here the vulnerability is a key factor to help determine what to expect from partner for this bid. Here are the different vulnerability situations and associated hand type:

1. Neither vul. ♠ K Q J 9 8 5 2 ♥ 2 ♦ 2 ♣ A Q 3 2



2. Not vul. vs vul. Same, or even lighter:

♠ K Q J 9 8 5 2 ♥ 2 ♦ 2 ♣ K 4 3 2

3. Vul. ♠ A K 10 9 8 5 4 2 ♥ 2 ♦ 2 ♣ A 3 2

## BIDDING A SUIT OVER A THREE-LEVEL PREEMPT

Here the rules are similar to those for bidding over a weak two. The two differences are:

1. A jump to game is more ambiguous, but tends to show a good playing strength hand with good values:

♠ A Q J 9 8 5 2 ♥ J ♦ K Q ♣ A K 2

2. You should have quite a good suit to bid at the three-level, but the high-card values are not always perfect. Again, by way of example over 3♣ I would bid 3♠ with

♠ A K 10 9 8 2 ♥ K 5 3 ♦ Q 2 ♣ 3 2

at any vulnerability.

## BIDDING A SUIT OVER A FOUR-LEVEL OPENER

Here we go. Are you a man or a mouse? Whether you often bid or often choose not to bid is a reflection of your overall aggressiveness at the bridge table. Experience has taught that these bids can be very effective. Some players think of a 4♥ opener as a transfer to 4♠ by the opponents! I remember a deal where someone overcalled 4♠ over a 4♥ opener on something like

♠ A K J 10 ♥ 2 ♦ — ♣ K Q 10 6 5 4 3 2

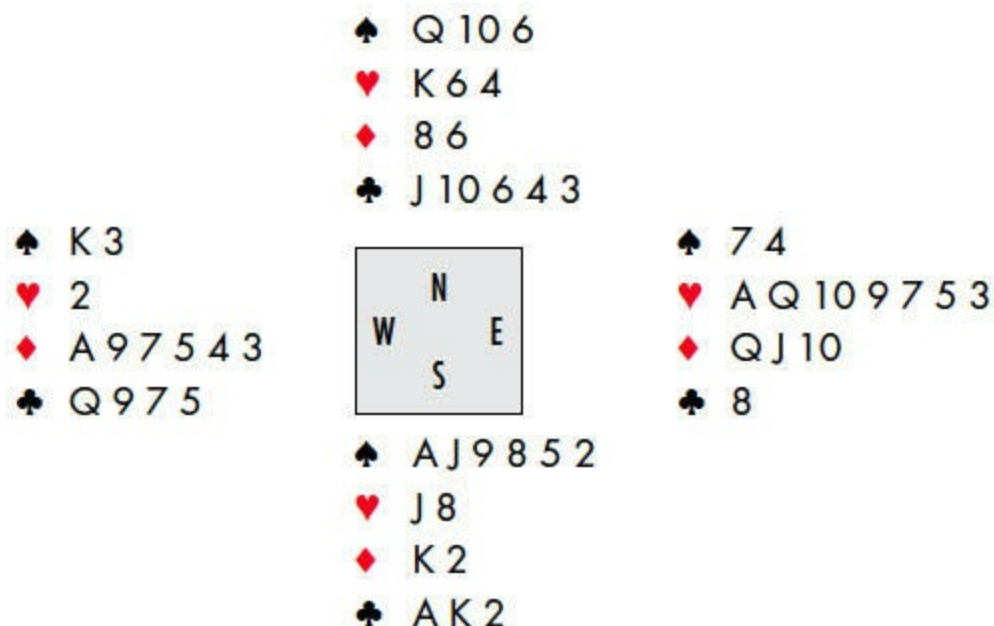
He made it!

N-S vul., you hold as South:

♠ A J 9 8 5 2 ♥ J 8 ♦ K 2 ♣ A K 2

East deals and opens 4♥. What do you bid?

I'd bid 4♠. Does it come with guarantees? No. Is it your best option? I think so, clearly. Here is the actual layout from a match in the 2007 Bermuda Bowl (hands rotated):



**Table 1**

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		4♥	dbl
all pass			

Doubling 4♥ could have been right, but wasn't — the contract made.

## Table 2

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	4♠	3♦ <sup>1</sup> all pass	3♠

1. Transfer preempt.

I disagree with the 4♠ bid at Table 2. The chances that the ♥K is working are slim. No, if you are going to bid game, 3NT is a much better choice, and indeed that would have made on a heart lead. However, you are rolling the dice by bidding at all. I think pass is the right call, even vulnerable, playing teams.

# Chapter 4

# EVALUATING INVITATIONS

You will have noticed some recurring themes in Chapters 2 and 3:

- Keeping an open mind.
- Listening to the opponents' bidding or lack thereof.
- Preempts mean bad splits.
- Trying to visualize how well or poorly your contracts will play, as well as the opponents' contracts. Upgrading and downgrading your holdings consistent with new information.

In this chapter I will continue to focus on these themes as well as introducing others. The decision whether or not to accept invitations is a *very* fine line. I will spend a lot of time on this subject as to me it is the meat and potatoes of being successful at the bridge table. I will try to help you ask yourself the right questions and with luck you will learn to improve your percentage of correct decisions. First, however, I am going to start this chapter by addressing an important concept that I have not yet introduced, but one that is critical to effective decision-making: processing speed.

When confronted with this phrase, most of us think first of computers. I believe that the most successful players have a better 'hard drive' than others. These are the facts. Some people like to play in Fast Pairs events while others don't, often because they need the extra time to make decisions and plays. We all know of players in our bridge community who are always subject to late plays and slow play penalties, while some consistently finish early. The advantage of being able to 'think faster' is significant. If you can think quickly and play in tempo, you have the advantage. You can use your extra time for more complex bidding and play decisions. In addition, the opponents cannot tell when you have a problem.

How can you process more quickly? One possibility is to play a lot of bridge. Another is to have a long-standing partnership where you don't have to think about what bids mean in various auctions — they have come up previously, and your partnership has discussed these situations.

A third idea, and one that everyone can put into practice, is to use your allocated time wisely. Bridge is a social game, but in tournaments you should be more focused on winning than making small talk. Before a board is played in a serious game:

- Do not engage in any talk with the opponents. This wastes your available time.

- Do not engage in conversation with your partner unless absolutely necessary. My only exceptions to these first two rules are: ‘Nice lead’, ‘nice play’, ‘nicely played’.
- Forget completely about the previous board. There will be lots of time later to discuss and learn from your session.
- Do not count your cards but sort them quickly. I have found that I have 13 cards 99.98% of the time, and my time is better spent looking at my high card structure, looking at whether I have good spot cards, and deciding my approach to bidding the hand, including what I will do if partner opens, the opponents open, etc...
- Stay in the present. Quite often one’s mind wants to wander, especially if one player is taking extra time. Try to use this time to reconstruct the other hands, and (at your own risk) try to think what your opponent could have that has delayed his bid or play (of course, you can’t do that with partner’s hesitation!). I actually have a secret word I say to myself that reminds me to bring my focus back to the now.

Okay, back to the subject of this chapter. Let’s look at some specific types of invitational situations and real-life deals that illustrate the principles involved.

# MAKING AND ACCEPTING INVITATIONS

Tip 16: When partner opens one of a suit, invite cautiously and accept aggressively. The reason is that you can't have both players in a partnership overbidding.

Without a fit be conservative in your invitations. For example,

♠ AK 6 3 2 ♥ 2 ♦ K 7 6 4 ♣ Q 4 3

is a hand with which you would open the bidding. But if partner opens 1♥ and rebids 2♣ over your 1♠, you should only invite to game with 2NT. The reason is that partner's hand could be weaker than yours, for example:

♠ 5 ♥ AK 7 6 4 ♦ J 3 2 ♣ K 10 6 2

You will be lucky to make 2NT opposite this. I am of the view that any 10-12 HCP is an invitational hand in this type of non-fit auction.

I play two other treatments in this auction:

- A rebid of 2♠ by responder is natural and not forcing, and
- Any other suit bid by responder creates a game force.

	PARTNER	YOU
	1♥	1♠
	2♥	?
2NT	invitational	
2♠	non-forcing	
3♣ (etc.)	game-forcing	

The reason for 3♣ (or 3♦) being game-forcing is that it is just too difficult to accommodate both invitational and forcing hands, so I use a rule that will be of the most benefit in the long run. That enables me to bid naturally, keeping the bidding as low as possible, without fear that partner will pass me out in a partial. If we look at the continuations after 2NT, you'll see how this works:

OPENER	RESPONDER
1♥	1♠
2♣	2NT
?	

3 ♣ This is natural and does not promise extra values.

3 ♦ Likely 1=5=3=4 shape with sufficient values for game, but wanting to probe for the best game. Quite often the invitational hand will have a hidden five-card (or longer) suit, and it might be in opener's fragment! (More on this shortly.)

3 ♥ 6-4 or 6-3 in hearts and clubs with enough points for game. Example:

♠ 2 ♥ A J 10 4 3 2 ♦ A 3 ♣ A K 5 3

3 ♠ 3=5=1=4 with enough points for game. Responder should be able to select the best game.

3NT To play. Not interested in other contracts.

The key point, though, is not necessarily to play the same treatments as I do, but to discuss these high frequency auctions with your partner(s).



# SHOWING SHORTNESS

This is one of *the* best tools, if not the best tool, for helping to decide whether or not to accept invitations. There are many types of splinter auctions. Two that I think are underutilized are splinters in game-forcing auctions and splinters after 2♣ openers. In both these cases a jump in a new suit shows shortness, *but does not promise extra values*.

Splinter after an opening bid:

♠ K Q 4   ♥ A K J 6 4 3   ♦ A Q 2   ♣ 3	
YOU	PARTNER
1♥	2♥
4♣	

Splinter after a 2♣ opening bid:

♠ J 10 4 3   ♥ J 5 4 2   ♦ 6   ♣ A Q 5 4	
PARTNER	YOU
2♣	2♦*
2♥	4♦

♠ 10 4 3   ♥ 2   ♦ J 4 3 2   ♣ A Q 6 5 3	
PARTNER	YOU
2♣	2♦*
2♥	2NT
3♦	4♥

You might be surprised that you can splinter in partner's first suit. However, you have denied three hearts with your 2NT bid, and with a doubleton heart you would simply

bid 3♥ over 3♦.

I use short-suit game tries in auctions where we raise a major, such as:

	OPENER	RESPONDER
	1♦	1♥
	2♥	?
or		
	OPENER	RESPONDER
	1♥	2♥
	?	

2010 World Open Pairs Final.

♠ 10 9 2	♠ K 7 4
♥ K 9 5 3	♥ A J 10 6 4
♦ 10 7 4	♦ 3
♣ A J 10	♣ K Q 5 2
GOHL	KIMELMAN
	1♥
2♥	3♦ <sup>1</sup>
4♥	

# 1. Short-suit game try.

Only eleven of the thirty-six pairs bid this excellent (I made an overtrick) game on 21 HCP.

Here is another example from the same event where most of the pairs missed the game, because the short-suit game try was in partner's suit. At our table the opponents bid as follows:

♠ A K 9 7 3	♠ Q 10 8 2
♥ Q 6 4	♥ A K 3
♦ 10 8 4 2	♦ A 5 3
♣ 3	♣ J 6 2
<b>WEST</b>	<b>EAST</b>
	1♣
1♠	2♣
all pass	

Only twelve pairs bid the cold 4♠. I play that 3♣ here is a short-suit game try, even when partner has bid clubs.

When deciding among reasonable alternatives, experience has shown me that making a shortness-showing bid is the best in the long run. It led me to my choice on the following hand where I had several good options:

2010 World Open Pairs. Both vul., I held as South:

♠ K 10 7 6 4 2   ♥ A 9 4   ♦ A 6 4 3   ♣ —			
<b>WEST</b>	<b>NORTH</b>	<b>EAST</b>	<b>SOUTH</b>
<i>Katz</i>	<i>Gohl</i>	<i>Nickell</i>	<i>Kimelman</i>
			1♠
pass	2♥ <sup>1</sup>	2NT <sup>2</sup>	?

1. Game-forcing.

2. Minors.

I expected West to be jumping in clubs and that my next call would likely be at the five-level, or higher. I decided action that would be the most descriptive and likely to help partner the most was to bid 4♣, a splinter in support of hearts. The bidding continued as expected:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
<i>Katz</i>	<i>Gohl</i>	<i>Nickell</i>	<i>Kimelman</i>
pass	2♥	2NT	1♠
5♣	pass	pass	4♣
			?

Bidding 3♥ over 2NT would have been okay, but not with the idea that it would ‘save bidding space’. Katz would have bid 5♣ anyway, and partner would have less information about my hand. In fact, in a strong partnership 3♥ should deny shortness in a minor. At this point, what would you have bid over 5♣?

The first question is what does partner’s pass mean? He does not want to penalize 5♣, and is at least mildly slammish. It might seem like a lot, but I bid 5♦. That was all partner needed to bid slam — in spades. It turned out that a diamond lead would have beaten a 6♥ contract, but 6♠ is cold. The full deal (hands rotated):

	♠ A 9 8 5	
	♥ K J 7 6 3	
	♦ 8 7	
	♣ A 2	
♠ Q 3		♠ J
♥ Q 10 5 2		♥ 8
♦ 9 2		♦ K Q J 10 5
♣ K J 7 4 3		♣ Q 10 9 8 6 5
	<div> <div>W</div> <div>N</div> <div>E</div> <div>S</div> </div>	
	♠ K 10 7 6 4 2	
	♥ A 9 4	
	♦ A 6 4 3	
	♣ —	

# KEEPING THE BIDDING ALIVE

Game invitations are usually made as one of the partnership's second-round bids. However, it's not unusual for opener to have a hand that is not invitational until the third round of bidding. This type of hand is typically unbalanced in the 16-18 point range.

N-S vul., playing teams, you hold as South:

♠ 9 4 ♥ Q 9 6 5 2 ♦ 5 4 ♣ K Q 9 3

Partner opens the bidding with 1♠. You respond 1NT, forcing. Partner now says 2♣. What is your rebid?

Playing a five-card major, 2/1 GF, forcing NT system, opener often has to rebid a three-card minor with some 5=2=3=3 minimum, as a rebid of two in the major promises a minimum of six cards in that suit. It is correct for responder to pass 2♣ with a singleton or void in the major, or three-card disparity between the lengths of his clubs and spades, *if there is no chance for game*.

The last point is important as opener could have as much as 18 HCP for the 2♣ rebid. So the expert bid with your hand is 2♠. You don't want to pass 2♣, and you are not strong enough to raise to 3♣. You are hoping that partner will take another call with invitational values, around 15-18 HCP.

Sure enough partner has

♠ A K J 10 5 2 ♥ 10 ♦ A 10 ♣ A 8 7 6

and you get to the good but hard to reach 4♠ game.

Tip 17: It is best to take a false preference to partner's major when you have 2-4 or 2-5 card length in partner's suits.

Tip 18: Try to keep the bidding alive if there is any chance for game. For

example, if your one-level overcall can be as high as 18 HCP, you need to raise or bid 1NT as advancer with 8+ HCP. Discuss this issue with your regular partner(s).

# PATTERNING OUT

Patterning out accomplishes the same goal as shortness-showing bids — by bidding your fragment or third suit, you pinpoint your shortness. It also has a very important secondary benefit; it brings the ‘pattern suit’ into consideration as the trump suit. This is often the case when responder has a long suit, but does not have enough strength to show it. Opener, by bidding the third suit, can cater to this possibility. Here are a couple of examples that will highlight this principle:

1994 Grand National Teams Final, neither vul. You hold as South (hands rotated):

♠ — ♥ A Q 8 4 3 ♦ A J 6 5 3 ♣ K 10 3

The bidding starts:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1♥
pass	1NT <sup>1</sup>	pass	2♦
pass	2♥	pass	?

1. Forcing.

This is a very common auction, and one in which North’s hand is very ill-defined. You may even be too high in 2♥ opposite something like

♠ K Q 3 ♥ 5 2 ♦ 9 4 2 ♣ 9 7 5 4 2

For that reason, South passed.

Of course, in his partnership South might have had a very good reason for passing, of which I am unaware, but for me the correct bid would be 3♣, showing at least a fragment in clubs, and some extra values. It highlights spade shortness. Notice that this is a much superior bid to 3♦. The reason for this is that 3♦ shows ten of your thirteen

cards while 3♣ shows twelve and also allows clubs to be a possible trump suit if partner is long there.

North's actual hand was

♠ J 7 4 ♥ K 10 ♦ 4 2 ♣ A Q 8 7 5 2

It turns out 6♣ is cold and even 7♣ will make when hearts are 3-3! As luck would have it the next example is from this same set of boards.

1994 Grand National Teams final, both vul. You hold as South (hands rotated):

♠ A 9 6 4 2 ♥ — ♦ A 6 2 ♣ A J 7 3 2

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1♠
pass	1NT <sup>1</sup>	pass	2♣
pass	2NT	pass	?

1. Forcing.

South bid 3♣ and partner went back to 3♠, which ended the auction. Instead, I strongly suggest showing the fragment by bidding 3♦. Yes, it will get you one level higher; however you have extra values (most players, including me, would have opened 1♠ with the ♦Q instead of the ♦A).

The other important reason for bidding 3♦ is that partner can easily have diamonds. He doesn't have a primary spade or a club fit, so must have at least one red suit. You may get one level higher, but you will get to the right strain. Partner's hand was in fact:

♠ 10 5 ♥ A J 8 7 2 ♦ K Q 10 9 5 ♣ 10

At the other table North-South did even worse by ending up in 3NT. You want to play in diamonds on this deal, and it may be hard if South doesn't introduce the suit.



# SETTING THE TRUMP SUIT

This is a simple principle but one often neglected. Either a nebulous cuebid is made or players tend to show other features of their hand, such as a sixth card in their suit or a side four-card minor.

The advantages of setting the suit:

- Setting the trump suit avoids ambiguity. If you, for example, bid a side four-card suit and partner raises or takes a preference, the level may make it awkward to support partner's suit and still be in a forcing auction. Quite often support is all partner is waiting for.
- You can tell partner whether you are weak or strong. A raise below game in a forcing auction suggests at least some slam interest, whereas an unnecessary jump to game shows support and a minimum.
- It allows partner to show if he is interested in game or slam.

## SETTING THE TRUMP SUIT AVOIDS AMBIGUITY

2009 Bermuda Bowl. You hold as South:

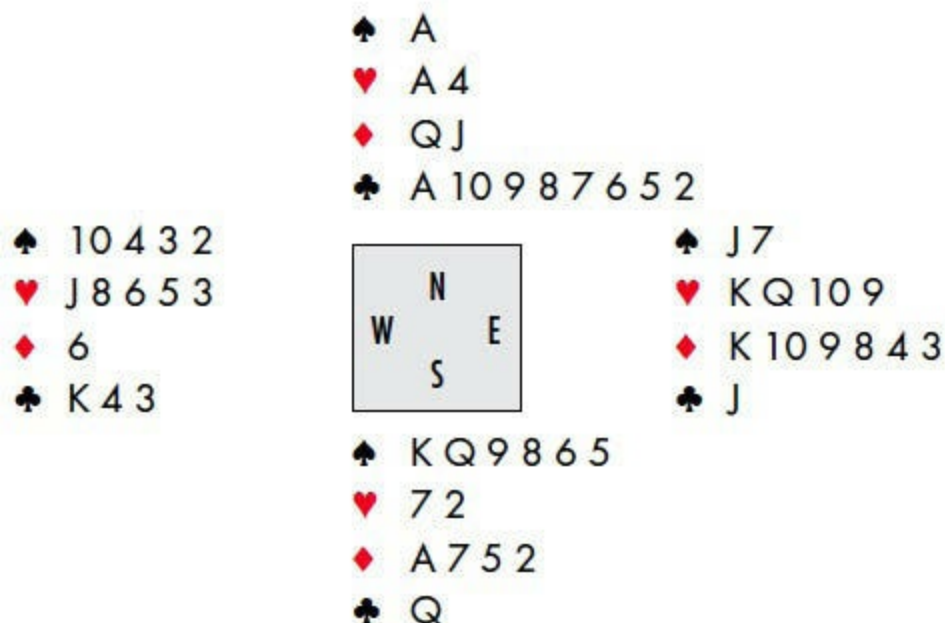
♠ K Q 9 8 6 5   ♥ 7 2   ♦ A 7 5 2   ♣ Q

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
<i>Danailov</i>	<i>Smirnov</i>	<i>Karakolev</i>	<i>Piekarek</i>
pass	1♣	1♦	1♠
pass	3♣	pass	?

Here 4♣ is the best choice. Your singleton club honor should be close to solidifying partner's suit. With your ace and source of tricks, slam could easily be in the cards.

Another acceptable way to show this type of hand is by cuebidding a new suit and then reverting to clubs, but this can get tricky. At the table, South bid 3♦. So far so good. But when West doubled 3♦ and it went pass, pass back to him, he needed to bid 4♣. When he redoubled instead, confusion ensued and they ended up down one in 4♠, when 6♣ makes (barring the unlikely lead of the ♦K). The full (interesting) deal (hands

rotated):



Tip 19: It is often right to raise partner with a singleton honor when he has rebid his suit. This is as good a holding as two small, and often better.

## YOU CAN TELL PARTNER WHETHER YOU ARE WEAK OR STRONG

2010 World Open Pairs Final.

Both vul., you hold as South (hands rotated):

♠ K 10 9 5 3   ♥ K 10 2   ♦ Q 6 3   ♣ 6 4	
YOU	PARTNER
	1♦
1♠	3♣
3NT	4♣

So here you are in a game-forcing auction. Partner pulls 3NT to 4♣. What does this mean? It means he is interested in slam. Are you? What do you bid?

There are three good reasons to find the right call:

First, you are playing matchpoints, so partner should have a pretty good hand to pull 3NT.

Secondly, you could have a hand like

♠ K Q 9 5 3 ♥ K 10 6 2 ♦ 6 3 ♣ 6 4

Partner wants to find out if you have a fit *and* working values for one of his suits.

You do, so bid 4♦, encouraging. With the example immediately above, the best call is 4NT, regressive. On the original hand your 4♦ bid will enable partner to easily bid the odds-on diamond slam. Partner's hand:

♠ — ♥ A Q 8 ♦ A J 10 5 2 ♣ A K Q 9 5

IT ALLOWS PARTNER TO SHOW IF HE IS INTERESTED IN GAME OR SLAM

2009 CNTC. N-S vul., I held as South (hands rotated):

♠ Q 10 8 ♥ J 9 ♦ A Q 9 3 ♣ A J 10 8

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♥	pass	2♣ <sup>1</sup>
pass	2♥	pass	?

1. Game-forcing.

I didn't know what to do. I had a good minimum opening bid, lots of spots and two hearts. Many Souths simply bid 3NT. I bid 3♥, with the hope that partner could take control. That is exactly what happened. Karl Gohl, holding

♠ A J 7 5 ♥ A Q 10 7 4 3 2 ♦ 7 ♣ 9

simply asked for aces and then bid the good slam, picking up 13 IMPs.

# EVALUATING INVITATIONS TO 3NT

Quite often 3NT can be made with fewer than the normal 25 HCP or so. Two key requirements are:

- A source of tricks.
- Fast tricks, usually aces, on the side.

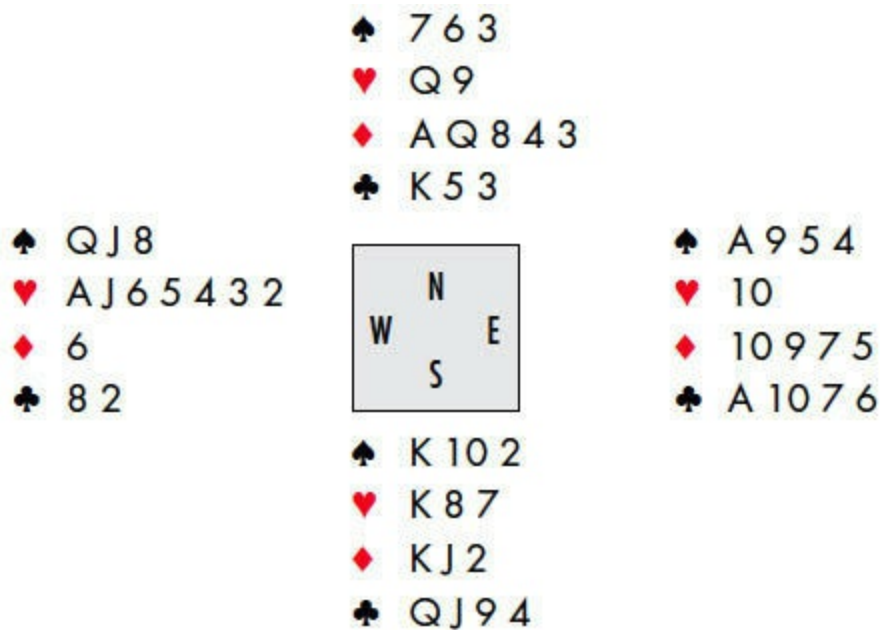
An overcall at the one-level is normally at least a five-card suit, so if it is solid, you only need four other tricks. A vulnerable two-level overcall is usually six cards in length. The expected length for a three-level preempt is seven cards. You get the idea. Sometimes you can get away without a stopper in a suit — perhaps the opponents did not make an overcall at the one-level, or you have three small opposite four small in the suit. All of these factors should be considered before you make your decision.

2010 World Open Pairs Final. Both vul., matchpoints, you hold as South:

♠ K 10 2   ♥ K 8 7   ♦ K J 2   ♣ Q J 9 4			
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
2♥	3♣ <sup>2</sup>	pass	1NT <sup>1</sup> ?

1. 11+ to 14.
2. Five-plus diamonds, invitational values.

This board was played against Rodwell and Zia, who had overcalled 2♥. This hand is not worth accepting a game invitation. The only plus is the ♦KJx. The negatives include one heart stopper and no aces. Besides, it is matchpoints. I signed off in 3♦, which was plenty high enough. The full deal (hands rotated):



Tip 20: Remember that 3NT is a race between you in scoring nine tricks and the opponents in scoring five first. Aces and long running suits are good for racing, queens and jacks are not.

Tip 21: In notrump auctions at teams, invite aggressively and accept cautiously. You can't have both players in a partnership overbidding. Picture some possible hands for partner and decide how good game will be.

Note that this Tip is the opposite of *Tip 16*. The reason of course is that the situation is different. In the former Tip the opening bid was in a suit, whereas here it is not.

# CARDS IN PARTNER'S SUIT(S)

When deciding to issue or accept an invitation, a king or queen in partner's suit is normally an asset and should be given greater weight than an equivalent high card in an unbid suit. This is the only situation where my partnerships can cuebid with a king.

2010 Rosenblum

E-W vul., you hold as South:

♠ Q 10 8 3 ♥ K 5 ♦ K Q 10 7 3 ♣ A 6

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1♦
pass	1♥	pass	1♠
pass	2♣ <sup>1</sup>	pass	2NT
pass	3♦	pass	?

1. Fourth suit, game-forcing.

What do you bid?

Partner is showing at least three diamonds with enough points to force to game. He has some slam aspirations since he didn't just bid 3NT. Are you interested? You should be. You have 14 HCP and two doubletons. You have good spots in your two suits and the king in the suit partner has bid. How do you tell partner this?

Bid 3♥. Partner's hand:

♠ A K J ♥ A 10 7 3 ♦ J 8 2 ♣ K 5 4

In the Rosenblum Cup we got to a slam that only ten out of 130 pairs bid! The key bid was Karl Gohl's 3♥ call. This showed a heart card with interest in slam. That was all I needed with my fitting spade honors. As it happened, we both used the same principle to reach the best contract.

Tip 22: If possible, try not to bid suits with no honors if there is a reasonable alternative. With

♠ 9 8 7 4 3 ♥ A K Q 9 ♦ 7 3 ♣ 6 2

I would strongly consider responding 1♥ to a minor-suit opening. With

♠ 6 2 ♥ A 3 ♦ 9 8 7 4 3 ♣ A K Q 9

I would bid 2♣, not 2♦, over a 1♥ or 1♠ opening bid by partner.

# VISUALIZING HANDS

This is a skill that seems hard to learn, and harder to master, even for experienced players. After partner (or the opponents) makes a bid, first ask yourself, ‘What can they have to make that bid?’ I try to make up several hands that would fit the bidding.

The next step is to say to yourself, ‘Okay, opposite my hand and my visualized examples of partner’s hand, how many tricks are we likely to make?’ Some players can successfully make an intuitive leap. They say, ‘If partner can jump to four, I can bid five (or six).’ I held this type of hand at the 2010 World Open Pairs Final.

Both vul., you hold as South (hands rotated):

♠ A 4 2   ♥ A J 10 7 6   ♦ A Q   ♣ 10 9 6	
PARTNER	YOU
1♠	1♥
4♠	1NT <sup>1</sup>
	?

1. 12-16.

What you do now?

My first thought was, ‘I have a really good hand for spades.’ Next I tried to visualize partner’s high cards and distribution. I know he likely has less than an opening bid, as he didn’t use Checkback. He probably has seven spades, KJ9xxxxx say, or six very good spades. He needs more, though. What about:

♠ K Q 10 8 7 5   ♥ 5   ♦ K 8 7   ♣ 8 4 2

Not nearly good enough. I finally concluded that partner might have enough for slam, so I cuebid 5♦. Karl’s actual hand was:



♠ K Q J 9 7 5 ♥ 8 2 ♦ K 9 8 7 2 ♣ —

and he was delighted to bid 6♠.

Here is an example that's a little more extreme.

Both vul., as South you hold:

♠ K Q 5 ♥ Q 10 8 7 6 2 ♦ 3 ♣ 10 5 3

Partner opens the bidding with 1NT (12-14 HCP). You bid 2♦, transfer to hearts, and partner bids 2♥, which denies four hearts *and* a maximum. What do you bid at matchpoints? Would your choice be different at IMPs?

At matchpoints it is best to have full values for any invitations. So, at matchpoints, pass is clear. However, had partner bid 3♥ over your transfer, you should bid 4♥, even at matchpoints.

What about at teams? Playing teams there is a strong incentive to bid vulnerable games. Assuming the opponents stop in a partial, you will lose 6 IMPs when you go down one, but win 10 IMPs when your game makes. So let's try and visualize some example hands.

So here's an example of a hand where game is well over 90%:

♠ A 4 3 ♥ A K 3 ♦ 9 5 4 2 ♣ Q J 2

Here is another hand where game is odds on to make:

♠ A 4 2 ♥ 9 4 3 ♦ 10 8 7 5 2 ♣ A K

Only 11 HCP but game makes on any 2-2 heart split, and some 3-1 splits.

What this tells me is that I need to invite game at teams when vulnerable. Not vulnerable, the odds slide back to inviting more conservatively, and I would settle for a heart partial. All of this assumes the opponents are silent. Any opposition bidding should help you evaluate whether your hand has improved or got worse.

Finally, what would you do if partner's 1NT were 15-17? A reasonable, but very

conservative approach is to invite at pairs. Personally I would transfer into the major and bid game at any form of scoring. For one thing, game will have a good play on a lot of minimum non-fitting hands from partner e.g.

♠ A J 4 3 ♥ K 3 ♦ 6 4 2 ♣ A K 7 2

The second advantage is you will not attract a speculative double as the opponents don't know if you have a 7-count or a 14-count.

Just as you must visualize positive possibilities, you must also consider detriments to invitational sequences. One common example is when partner has two suits. It is important to consider your holdings in both of these suits before making your choice. This issue is dealt with in more detail in Chapter 5.

# INVITATIONS AFTER OVERCALLS

Decisions in this area are affected by your overcalling style. However here are some general guidelines that have worked for me:

*In order to invite after a one-level overcall you need around an opening bid.*

With less of a fit or without a source of tricks, more high cards are necessary. One thing to note about one-level overcalls is that if advancer shows values (by bidding a new suit or by cuebidding) the overcaller should rebid his suit with all minimum hands. This is important when an overcall can be anywhere from 6-18 HCP, otherwise advancer is guessing wildly. Here is a perfect example of a pair that apparently did not have the above agreements:

2009 Venice Cup,  
N-S vul.

♠ J  
♥ A 10 7 3 2  
♦ 10 7 6 5 2  
♣ Q 2

♠ 9 6 3  
♥ K Q 9 8 5 4  
♦ K 9 8  
♣ 5

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ A K 2  
♥ J 6  
♦ A 4 3  
♣ 10 8 6 4 3

♠ Q 10 8 7 5 4  
♥ —  
♦ Q J  
♣ A K J 9 7

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1♣
1♥	pass	1♠	pass
2♦	pass	3♣	pass
3♦	pass	3♠	pass
4♠	dbl	all pass	

Hard to believe that East-West have only 20 HCP! Suffice it to say that West should rebid 2♥. East has enough to invite game, but not to force the way she did. North punished the poor bidding by doubling and collecting +300. At the other table West passed 1♠ on the second round of bidding to go +80.

*Opposite a two-level overcall, game can be there with as little as 10 HCP and a fit.* This is because a two-level overcall usually shows at least a six-card suit and an opening bid. On this invitational auction:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	2NT	1♣ pass	2♣ ?

North should have club support to bid 2NT. The worse the club support, the more high cards are needed.

Tip 23: If you are not accepting, it is usually wise to revert back to your suit. If you cannot make nine tricks in notrump, you normally cannot make eight (or seven!).

## OTHER CONSIDERATIONS FOR INVITING AFTER AN OVERCALL

Have the opponents opened a major or a minor? If you are hoping to make 3NT, remember that opener's major will usually be led. You also usually know the suit is at least five cards long, and you need to ask yourself, 'Do I have one stopper or two (or more)?'

If they open a minor, they will often not have length in this suit, especially if they are playing a strong notrump system.

You often need fewer points than normal to make game when they open the bidding. This is because all their points are going to be in one hand, and you know which hand from the bidding! This opponent will be subject to endplays (even at Trick 1!), pressure in discarding, and squeezes.

If we overcall a 1NT opening, we need *even fewer* points, for the same reasoning above; in addition, most of our cards lie over theirs.

## SECONDARY INVITATIONS

This is a situation where you make a non-invitational bid but the opponents compete. You have decided not to sell out, but have a maximum that can be shown without raising the bidding level. This sounds convoluted, and as so often is the case, the principle is best illustrated by an example.

2009 Bermuda Bowl. E-W vul. As South (hands rotated) you hold

♠ K 8 5   ♥ A 9 8 6 3   ♦ 7 6 5 4   ♣ 3

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♣	1♠	pass	2♠
3♣	pass	pass	?

South realized that a lot of people would treat his hand as a limit raise, but not vulnerable he chose the more conservative route. Over 3♣ he was always going to compete but now he could bid 3♥. This said to partner, 'I have hearts — values, probably a suit — and a maximum raise. Bid game if you have a maximum with fitting cards.' North had exactly that:

♠ A Q 10 4 3   ♥ K J 10   ♦ A 9 2   ♣ Q 10

but did not reward his partner's excellent call and passed! Notice that 6♠ is essentially on a heart guess!

# ‘50%’ SLAMS

Percentages are a big factor in bridge, and are used in many contexts. We talk about the percentage of a 3-2 split when playing in a 4-4 trump fit. We also know that with no other information to guide us, an ace will be onside 50% of the time.

In bidding it is the same thing. We talk about how good a game has to be to bid it. As mentioned above, we will accept greater risk bidding vulnerable games at teams than at other vulnerabilities or forms of scoring. But what I want to talk about is slams.

Often we will be okay with bidding a 50% small slam, whereas for a grand slam we look to be a 2:1 favorite, or to have a 67% chance to make. I like these odds, but will extrapolate them to a couple of different scenarios.

## A SMALL SLAM MISSING A CASHABLE AK IN A SIDE SUIT

2009 World Team Championships	♠ 10 6 ♥ K J 10 8 4 ♦ K Q ♣ K Q 7 2	
♠ K J 8 5 3 ♥ 7 2 ♦ 8 7 5 2 ♣ 10 5	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; display: inline-block;">             N              W      E              S           </div>	♠ A 9 7 4 ♥ 5 ♦ 9 6 4 3 ♣ 9 8 4 3
	♠ Q 2 ♥ A Q 9 6 3 ♦ A J 10 ♣ A J 6	

Thirty-eight pairs reached a small slam in hearts on the North-South holdings. It was made twenty-five times (seven out of eleven in the Bermuda bowl, eight out of twelve times in the Venice Cup and ten out of fifteen in the Senior Bowl) or 66% of the time!

Obviously, how the bidding went will often determine whether the killing lead is clear. But if it is not a subtle auction, the lead may be much harder to find. Here is a deal that came up in the 2010 CNTC.

You hold as South

♠ K Q J 9 7 6 4 ♥ 4 ♦ 10 8 ♣ J 4 3

While you are admiring your spade suit, partner opens 2NT, 20-21 HCP. Now what?

When this deal came up, I had no agreed way to bid this hand. The closest I could get to science was to:

- Transfer to spades at the three-level and raise to 4♠, a mild slam try, or
- Transfer to spades at the three-level and raise to 5♠.

I think either of these choices is reasonable. However I decided just to bid 6♠! Part of the reason for this aggressive choice was the fact that we were in the race for the top qualifying spot, with a reasonable edge over the next qualifier. But I also thought, 'The slam could be cold, it could be 50%, or it could make on a lucky lead. We have given the opponents no information to help guide their choice.' The full deal (hands rotated):

	♠ A 8	
	♥ A 6 2	
	♦ Q J 9 5	
	♣ A K Q 7	
♠ 10 5 3 2		♠ —
♥ K Q 9 7		♥ J 10 8 5 3
♦ 6 4 3 2		♦ A K 7
♣ 9		♣ 10 8 6 5 2
	♠ K Q J 9 7 6 4	
	♥ 4	
	♦ 10 8	
	♣ J 4 3	

West reasonably led the ♥K and we chalked up the slam with twelve top tricks. Some people might say this is a bad bid, off an ace-king. Others might say this was a 75% slam, since the last lead most experts would make with the West hand is a diamond!

## 7 OR 5 (OR 4) DEALS

Most players are familiar with this situation: either you are going down in six or making all the tricks. Here is an example hand:

♠	A K 5 3 2
♥	6 4 3
♦	A 5
♣	7 4 2
	<div></div>
♠	Q J 6 4
♥	A Q J 10 5 2
♦	6 4 2
♣	—

On a diamond lead you will make all the tricks if the heart finesse wins. If not, you will be held to eleven tricks. Change the hands slightly;

♠	A K 5 3 2
♥	6 4 3
♦	A 5 3
♣	7 2
	<div></div>
♠	Q J 6 4
♥	A Q J 10 5 2
♦	6 4 2
♣	—

Now it is a 4 or 7 hand! I guess it depends how lucky you feel. The other issue is the lead. If you don't know what they will lead, small slam is probably the odds-on choice. But on a diamond lead you can gain a lot of IMPs by bidding the grand.



# Chapter 5

# DECLARER PLAY

Yes, you read correctly — a chapter on declarer play in a book on bidding judgment. When you bid, you constantly receive new information from both partner and the opposition. Besides constantly reevaluating your hand against this data, you also need to determine how well or poorly the hand is going to play, whether by your side or theirs. In this chapter we will look at:

- High card evaluation
- Picking the trump suit with a long suit and a fit for partner
- Minimum hands and avoiding penalty doubles
- When partner has a two-suited hand
- Lead-directing bids

# HIGH CARD EVALUATION

If you hold ♥KJ9, you initially count 4 HCP for this holding. But let's say the opponents are vulnerable and overcall your partner's 1NT opening with 2♥ or 3♥. Now your heart holding will produce two tricks in a notrump contract 99% of the time.

On the other hand if LHO bids hearts, you can assume that you have a heart stopper, but in a suit contract your holding in this suit will likely produce zero tricks.

N-S vul. As North you hold:

♠ 10 6 4 ♥ 10 9 7 6 ♦ K 8 ♣ K 10 7 2

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♥	dbl	2♥
pass	2♠	pass	?

Many players would look at their hand and bid 3♥ without much thought. Just 6 HCP, ♠10xx and no aces. Actually, if you look closer you have two aces! On the bidding your kings are very likely behind the aces. You know this from the takeout double. In addition you have four hearts, a ruffing value and three tens. Any heart finesse is likely going to be onside. And finally, this hand will probably play close to double dummy. Bid 4♥. The full deal from a recent Sectional:



1. Multi.
2. Pass or correct.

I knew that, unless I could put partner in at Trick 1, 3NT was likely to play well with clubs as a source of tricks. I also knew two things that would make 4♥ play well, maybe very well:

- The ♥K was onside, and
- Partner had a decent fit for the majors, as he could have passed 3♣. That made my ♠Q valuable.

Another plus was that partner was likely to have at most two clubs. So I had an easy 4♥ bid. It went pass, pass and East fell from grace and doubled. We got a complete top for -100. In fact, even -500 would have been a top! The full deal (hands rotated):

♠ A 7  
♥ —  
♦ 10 7 6 4 3  
♣ A K 10 9 7 5

♠ K 9 8 4 3 2  
♥ 10 5 3  
♦ Q 8  
♣ 4 2

♠ J 10  
♥ K 7 6 2  
♦ A K J 9 2  
♣ Q 6

♠ Q 6 5  
♥ A Q J 9 8 4  
♦ 5  
♣ J 8 3

Diagram illustrating a bridge hand layout. The cards are distributed among four players (North, South, East, West) and a dummy. The cards are: North: ♠ K 9 8 4 3 2, ♥ 10 5 3, ♦ Q 8, ♣ 4 2; South: ♠ J 10, ♥ K 7 6 2, ♦ A K J 9 2, ♣ Q 6; East: ♠ Q 6 5, ♥ A Q J 9 8 4, ♦ 5, ♣ J 8 3; West: ♠ A 7, ♥ —, ♦ 10 7 6 4 3, ♣ A K 10 9 7 5.

West knew what I knew and should have bid four of a minor, and they might have even bid a slam. But once again I was in possession of some very important information — 4♥ was going to play great! — and if necessary, I would have sacrificed over six of a minor.

# PICKING THE TRUMP SUIT WITH A LONG SUIT AND A FIT FOR PARTNER

This is reasonably frequent occurrence yet a lot of players, including world-class ones, seem to get it wrong at the table. In a nutshell:

Tip 26: It is almost always better to declare in the long trump suit rather than in one where you have at most three-card support, and partner has promised five cards.

The main issue is that unless you have entries, your long suit cannot be set up and run. The second flaw in the play of a 5-3 fit instead of, say, a 7-1 fit is that the five-card hand often has many losers to ruff out, and will usually be subject to losing control, or getting overruffed, or the defense leading trumps to minimize the ruffs taken.

Here is a deal from the 2009 World Team Championships on which not many North-South pairs got to the right spot:

	♠ Q 9 4	
	♥ —	
	♦ K Q J 9 8 6 5 2	
	♣ 6 3	
♠ K 8 3		♠ J 6
♥ A J 10 8 6 3 2		♥ K 9 5
♦ 3		♦ A 7
♣ 8 7		♣ K J 10 9 5 2
	♠ A 10 7 5 2	
	♥ Q 7 4	
	♦ 10 4	
	♣ A Q 4	

First the auctions from a Venice Cup match:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
3♥	4♦	4♥	1♠
pass	4♠	all pass	pass

South is mostly to blame (but see below). Partner has three spades, short hearts and long diamonds. There may be no entries to the diamonds; any ruffs in the short trump holding will promote trump tricks for the opponents. Surely 4♠ will play terribly! But here's what happened at the other table.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
2♥	5♦	5♥	1♠
pass	5♠	pass	pass
dbl	all pass		pass

This crime by South is worse as North bid very well. West made a questionable double, after which surely South couldn't help but find a call of 6♦ — wrong again!

In a Bermuda Bowl match, one South made the same error as in our first example auction by passing 4♠:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
2♥	3♦	4♥	1♠
pass	4♠	all pass	dbl <sup>1</sup>

### 1. Minimum.

My earlier statement that South is to blame is not completely true. A more accurate statement is that South should much prefer diamonds as trumps, as a little analysis will surely show how well the respective contracts will fare.

But North is guiltier! With a spade fit, the two hands should play well in diamonds, and he should not give partner a choice of where to play with this holding. If I were 3-6 in spades and diamonds with the same high-card structure, okay. But with eight diamonds, insist on diamonds, for the above-stated reasons! At the other table:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
2♥	5♦	dbl	1♠ all pass

Here, North found the winning call for a sizeable pick up.

Tip 27: On distributional, competitive hands (where you are not bidding on pure power) a 6-2 or 7-1 fit will usually play better than a 4-4 fit.



# MINIMUM HANDS AND AVOIDING PENALTY DOUBLES

Tip 28: It is important to take into account the possibility of being doubled when choosing among reasonable alternative contracts.

Quite often the choice is between notrump and a suit contract. You can play 1NT, two of a major or three of a minor. It is usually easier to double the latter two contracts with the knowledge that KQ1092 will be worth three or four tricks if this suit is trumps, and maybe only one trick if the contract is notrump.

Here is an example of a disaster on a 'nothing hand' that occurred in the 2009 Bermuda Bowl, with E-W vul.:

<div> <div> ♠ AKQ105 ♥ A52 ♦ KJ8 ♣ 76 </div> <div> ♠ 972 ♥ QJ983 ♦ Q965 ♣ A </div> <div> ♠ J84 ♥ 76 ♦ A743 ♣ KQ104 </div> <div> ♠ 63 ♥ K104 ♦ 102 ♣ J98532 </div> <div> <div>W</div> <div>N</div> <div>E</div> <div>S</div> </div> </div>			
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1NT	pass	?

South has a decision as to what contract to play: 1NT or 3♣. He chose the latter, transferring via 2♠. West found a nice reopening double which East had no problem

converting to penalties. Down two for -300 ended up being a loss of 11 IMPs, as their partners were in a heart partial, down a couple for -200.

With marginal values, some serious consideration should be given to playing in the lower-level contract, when it is a theoretical coin toss as to which partial will *likely* play better. As they say, 'No double no trouble'.

# WHEN PARTNER HAS A TWO-SUITED HAND

Michaels, Klinger and other conventions are used to show two-suiters, usually with a weak hand. They allow the partnership to compete, interfere with the opponents' communication and find beneficial sacrifices.

When deciding how high to bid opposite partner's two-suiter it is important to keep in mind how well you fit partner's second suit. If you don't have much of a fit then you will be unable to set up the suit. To make matters worse, the opponents will usually lead trumps on these auctions to minimize or completely take away your ruffing possibilities. Now try to set up a suit combination like Q10xxx opposite a singleton! As usual an example is worth a million words:

## 1989 Venice Cup Final

Both vul.

<div> <div> ♠ Q J 8 7 2  ♥ Q 9  ♦ A J 9 7 6  ♣ A </div> <div> ♠ A 5 3  ♥ 6  ♦ Q 8 2  ♣ K Q 9 7 5 4 </div> <div> <div> <div>N</div> <div>W      E</div> <div>S</div> </div> <div> ♠ K 9 6  ♥ A 8 5 2  ♦ —  ♣ J 10 8 6 3 2 </div> </div> <div> ♠ 10 4  ♥ K J 10 7 4 3  ♦ K 10 5 4 3  ♣ — </div> </div>			
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♣	3♣ <sup>1</sup>	3♥	3♠
pass	4♣	all pass	

## 1. Spades and diamonds.

Why would you want to bid 3♠ on the South hand? You have only three of them and no cards in partner's other suit! Meanwhile, you have six cards in opener's suit and four in responder's! Nobody is making anything on this misfit. Pass! At this vulnerability I would play partner for values and double any game. South might have thought her bid would help her partner with the lead — I don't know. I do know that her partner took her seriously and bid 4♠. Fortunately the opponents didn't double, so it was only -300! As an aside, I would overcall 1♠ with the North hand, which is what happened at the other table. More on why in Chapter 10.

At the other table, East-West bid up to 5♥, which was doubled for -800 and 15 big IMPs away. I think that auction is worth taking a look at:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♣	1♠	dbl	2♣
pass	4♠	5♥	dbl
all pass			

The first three bids are fine. You lose some objectivity when you know the full deal, but I don't like the 2♣ bid. Normally, yes. Here, though, the opponents have bid your two long suits. Partner rates to have a diamond suit and you only have three trumps. I would bid 2♠ and listen closely. If partner makes a game try I should know what to do. Here North would likely bid 3♦, and South should simply refuse the game try by going back to 3♠.

One more example if you are not yet convinced:

2010 Rosenblum Cup. As South you hold with both vul.

♠ A 10 4 2   ♥ 9 3 2   ♦ —   ♣ K J 8 7 3 2

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	2♥ <sup>1</sup>	2♠	?

## 1. 5-5 hearts and a minor, 5-10 HCP

You have at least an eight-card heart fit, which is good. But you have no diamonds, which you are 99% sure is partner's second suit. What are you going to do with all of those diamond losers if your side declares a heart contract? Even if 3♥ is not directly invitational partner is still allowed to bid more if he has better than the minimum announced distribution. The full deal (hands rotated):

♠ —

♥ QJ8654

♦ K109762

♣ Q

♠ 965

♥ AK

♦ Q543

♣ A1064

♠ KQJ873

♥ 107

♦ AJ8

♣ 95

♠ A1042

♥ 932

♦ —

♣ KJ8732

W

N

E

S

South did bid 3♥ — to his regret, as the bidding continued:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
4♠	2♥	2♠	3♥
dbl	5♦	pass	5♥
	all pass		

Fortunately hearts were 2-2 but it was still -500 for North-South against no game the other way, for a 12-IMP loss.

# LEAD-DIRECTING BIDS

Quite often you get an opportunity where you can safely tell partner what to lead. We saw this in the example on p. 55, when in the process of competing I was able to suggest a good lead to partner.

Let's look at some situations that safely allow you to help partner with a lead. They come up more frequently than you might think.

## DOUBLING CUEBIDS

Doubling a cuebid for a lead is very desirable. However, you must still take care. First, you don't want to double when the opponents are about to bid a slam that you now know will go down. Why let them in on this information? Pass. Here is an example that happened to me early in 2011:

Neither vul. At IMPs, you hold as South:

♠ 7 5   ♥ 6 2   ♦ A 10 8 5 3   ♣ K 6 4 2

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	pass	4♦	pass
4♥	pass	5♣	?

What do you do?

East has extra values, and is trying for slam despite West's signoff. Don't discourage him — pass. At the table during a 2011 CNTC qualifier, my partner unthinkingly made a lead-directing double. They stopped in five, making on the nose. The full deal:

	♠ 10 9 4 2	
	♥ 3	
	♦ K Q 9 7	
	♣ 9 8 7 3	
♠ Q 6 5		♠ A K 8 3
♥ A K 10 9 7		♥ Q J 8 5 4
♦ J 6 2		♦ 4
♣ Q J		♣ A 10 5
	♠ J 7	
	♥ 6 2	
	♦ A 10 8 5 3	
	♣ K 6 4 2	

	N	
W		E
	S	

Sometimes players unthinkingly double a cuebid when they know they are going to be on lead. Again, you are only helping the opponents in telling them how high to bid, and how to play the hand. My partner and I play that, when you know you are going to be on lead, a double of a cuebid shows that suit and is a mild suggestion of a sacrifice. As always, double only when you are, on balance, reasonably certain this bid will help your partnership more than theirs.

Other ambiguities might arise. For example, what happens when you double a cuebid of a suit your side has bid? Is that asking for that lead, or just the opposite? Partnerships need an agreement. You can play this either way.

The other issue is doubling when the cuebid is actually showing a singleton or void. This is sometimes hard to read. But if you double, you are really helping the opponents. First, it tells them which way to take a finesse when declarer's holding is AQJ10xx opposite a singleton. Second, it tells the opponents, 'I have values in your short suit, so there is a better chance that your combined high cards are working.'

## DOUBLING SHORTNESS-SHOWING BIDS

There are some options that you can play in these situations. The one my partner and I have adopted is that a double here asks for the next highest suit to be led. The rationale is twofold. First, a lead in the splinter suit will only win one trick, and is often a futile lead choice. The second reason this treatment makes sense is that sometimes you want a suit led, but don't want to risk a bid in that suit.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♠	pass	4♣ <sup>1</sup>	?

1. Splinter.

Dbl — asks for a diamond lead

Pass — either no preference or would like a heart lead

With this agreement I would double with

♠ 4 3 ♥ A 2 ♦ K Q ♣ J 9 8 6 4 3 2

If they bid slam, a diamond lead should beat it. How about this one:

E-W vul., teams as South you hold

♠ 5 3 ♥ A 3 2 ♦ 3 ♣ J 9 8 6 4 3 2

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	1♠	4♣*	?

I doubled for a diamond lead. I am hoping I can get a ruff if partner has an entry in spades or clubs. The full deal:

	♠ A K J 10 4	
	♥ 4	
	♦ Q 9 5 4 2	
	♣ 10 5	
♠ Q 6		♠ 9 8 7 2
♥ Q 10 9 8 5		♥ K J 7 6
♦ J 8 7		♦ A K 10 6
♣ A K Q		♣ 7
	♠ 5 3	
	♥ A 3 2	
	♦ 3	
	♣ J 9 8 6 4 3 2	



Partner did lead a diamond against 4♥, and this resulted in down two and a 13-IMP gain. What if you wanted a spade lead? Pass. Partner knows that you would double if you wanted a diamond lead.

## AFTER A CONVENTIONAL BID SHOWING SUPPORT

Players use a variety of gadgets to show different hands with good trump support. You can effectively suggest a lead when they have found a fit, at least nine cards in length. They will rarely be interested in doubling you at the three-level when they don't know whether they have a slam or not. Help partner with a lead when you can.

A thoughtful bid on the deal below led to a big gain in the 2009 Bermuda Bowl:

E-W vul., as South you hold

♠ 4 3   ♥ 9 2   ♦ K J 8 6 5   ♣ A 4 3 2			
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	1♠	2NT <sup>1</sup>	?

1. Heart raise, four-plus cards.

Ralph Katz knew that the opponents were likely to bid game in hearts. Therefore partner would be on lead, with no strong hint as to what is the best choice. He bid 3♦ to help partner with his choice. He wasn't overly concerned that the opponents would double them in 3♠ (he would go back to partner's suit) when East-West were vulnerable with a nine-card heart fit. There was also the small chance that partner had a diamond fit and they might have a profitable sacrifice in 5♦. The full deal (hands rotated):

♠ A Q 9 8 7 6  
♥ 6  
♦ Q 7 3  
♣ Q 9 5

♠ K 2  
♥ A K J 8 7 5  
♦ A 9 4  
♣ 7 6

♠ J 10 5  
♥ Q 10 4 3  
♦ 10 2  
♣ K J 10 8

♠ 4 3  
♥ 9 2  
♦ K J 8 6 5  
♣ A 4 3 2

The diamond lead left declarer with no chance in 4♥. At the other table, with a slightly different auction, South did not bid. North reasonably led the ♣5, which gave declarer his contract.

# AFTER WE PREEMPT AND THEY DOUBLE FOR TAKEOUT

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	3♣	dbl	?

East is showing support for all unbid suits with a double. With the preemptor likely short in these suits, there is usually no value in introducing a new suit as natural and competitive. With that kind of hand it is better to be quiet. However, partner is almost always going to be on lead, and you want to help him out if you can. The way to do this is to bid a new suit as lead-directing (it also is forcing back to the preemptor's suit). This is a situation where the opponents are going to bid, and possibly bid quite high. You want to help partner with the lead.

Let's say in the above auction, with E-W vul., you hold one of the following hands:

♠ 4 3 2 ♥ K Q J 3 ♦ 5 4 3 ♣ A 3 2

Bid 3♥.

♠ A Q ♥ J 4 3 2 ♦ 5 4 3 2 ♣ 4 3 2

Bid 3♠. You might actually beat 4♥ if they bid it. Also they might have problems getting to 4♠ if that is the right spot.

♠ 7 5 4 3 2 ♥ K Q 4 2 ♦ — ♣ A 4 3 2

Bid 3♥. You will bid to at least 5♣, but you want to help partner with the lead. As a side benefit to this bid, if North holds

♠ — ♥ J 5 3 ♦ 4 3 2 ♣ K Q 10 8 7 6 5

he will compete to 6♣, if pushed.

This treatment is also applicable over weak twos. E-W vul., playing teams, South holds:

♠ J 8 ♥ 10 6 3 ♦ J 9 8 5 ♣ A Q J 5

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	2♠	dbl	?

South with this hand should bid 3♣, lead-directing. If West passes, North is forced to bid 3♠.

# Chapter 6

# NEGATIVE AND RESPONSIVE DOUBLES

## LICENSE TO DOUBLE

Being a James Bond fan I couldn't resist using this title to introduce this very important and comprehensive bidding tool. We all are 'licensed' as we have several red double cards in our bidding boxes to use as we see fit. But answer these questions:

- How wisely do you use this bidding tool?
- Are you aware of the range of possible meanings that may be attached to a double?
- Is your partner on the same wavelength?

This is the first of four chapters on doubles, an area where I think a lot of players could improve their decision-making, thus increasing their success rate. This chapter deals with the basics of negative and responsive doubles.

# DEFINING NEGATIVE DOUBLES

As with every other bid, you need to have a common understanding with partner as to what can be expected for a negative double. Each partnership is different but I will describe my agreements, and why I prefer them. You will then be able to decide whether you wish to adopt these or use other criteria. The key, of course, is to have *some* agreement.

At the one-level my negative double shows four cards in the unbid major, and enough points to bid at the one-level. Simple enough... maybe.

LHO	PARTNER	RHO	YOU
	1♣	1♥	dbl

For me, double here shows exactly four spades and 6+ points. Bidding 1♠ shows five-plus spades and 6+ points

LHO	PARTNER	RHO	YOU
	1♣	1♠	dbl

Similarly, here double shows four or more hearts and 6+ points (but see the section on 2/1 responses below).

The first thing to recognize in the definition and my examples is that my negative double says nothing about the fourth suit, in both of these examples diamonds. It only focuses on the unbid major.

There are two important differences between the above auctions. The first is that when they bid hearts at the one-level you can differentiate between four- and five-card holdings in the spade suit. The second difference is that when you have hearts you are forcing the partnership to 1NT or the two-level.

# VALUES NEEDED AT THE TWO-, THREE- AND HIGHER LEVELS

When making a negative double you need to have sufficient points for that level. Six points at the one-level is only a guide, and includes distributional values. The two competing issues that should factor in your decision are:

- Getting your hand off your chest, and
- Overstating your values, often causing partner to make a later unsuccessful choice.

## ONE-LEVEL NEGATIVE DOUBLES

LHO	PARTNER	RHO	YOU
	1♣	1♥	?

I would double with

♠ Q 8 7 3 ♥ 7 3 ♦ K 9 5 4 ♣ 8 4 2

This would be my minimum at most vulnerabilities, although at favorable vulnerability I would make a negative double with

♠ Q 8 7 3 ♥ 7 3 ♦ Q 9 5 4 ♣ 8 4 2

I will *always* make a negative double at the one-level with an ace and four cards in the other major, e.g.

♠ 9 8 7 3 ♥ 7 3 ♦ A 9 5 4 ♣ 8 4 2



Tip 29: When you have an ace, even without another point, always respond to a one-level opening bid or (with the right distribution) make a negative double at the one-level.

## TWO-LEVEL NEGATIVE DOUBLES

Simply said, you need more values to commit to the two-level: I would say somewhere around a decent eight-count.

LHO	PARTNER	RHO	YOU
	1♣	1♠	?

Playing a strong notrump system I would double with

♠ 7 3 ♥ Q 8 7 3 ♦ K 9 5 4 ♣ Q 4 2

but not much less. My only exception is when I know my cards are working, for example with

♠ 7 3 ♥ 10 8 7 3 ♦ A 5 4 ♣ Q J 4 2

Playing a weak notrump system is in my view much superior in many ways, and the above auction exemplifies one of its key advantages. On this auction I know that partner has either an unbalanced hand or a balanced hand with 15+ HCP. With the former, if I double, he will bid a suit, and I know we must have at least one eight-card fit. With the latter he will bid 1NT and we will be in the right place.

2009 World Championships. With neither vul., as South you hold

♠ 8 ♥ 10 8 6 5 ♦ K 4 ♣ K 9 8 7 5 2

Partner opens 1♠ and East overcalls 2♦. Do you or don't you?

I believe you are asking for sheer misery by passing. The right call to me is double. 100%. Your  $\spadesuit K4$  is as good as an ace. If partner bids  $2\heartsuit$  you will pass (remember, this is the amount of values you have promised; don't hang partner). If he bids  $2\spadesuit$  you will pass. If he bids 2NT you can correct to  $3\clubsuit$ . If he bids  $3\clubsuit$  you can raise to  $4\clubsuit$  (remember, my double does not promise a club suit).

One South took a different view in the Bermuda Bowl. Let's look at the full deal and see what happened as a result:

<p>♠ KJ64</p> <p>♥ Q97</p> <p>♦ 1083</p> <p>♣ Q104</p>	<p>♠ A Q 10 9 5 3</p> <p>♥ A 4 3</p> <p>♦ 6</p> <p>♣ A J 6</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; margin: 10px 0; text-align: center;"> <p>N</p> <p>W       E</p> <p>S</p> </div> <p>♠ 8</p> <p>♥ 10 8 6 5</p> <p>♦ K 4</p> <p>♣ K 9 8 7 5 2</p>	<p>♠ 7 2</p> <p>♥ K J 2</p> <p>♦ A Q J 9 7 5 2</p> <p>♣ 3</p>
--	---	---

<b>WEST</b>	<b>NORTH</b>	<b>EAST</b>	<b>SOUTH</b>
pass	1♠	2♦	pass
3♦	all pass		

As you can see, 3♦ goes down one, while 5♣ makes North-South on a non-heart lead and a club guess. In fact, 3NT makes with a club guess. We will look at a Venice Cup auction on the same deal later in this chapter.

## HIGHER-LEVEL NEGATIVE DOUBLES

Negative doubles at the three-level and higher are more card-showing than showing a specific distribution, and to make them you need at least a good 10 HCP. Having said that, you need to have a rough plan for the remainder of the auction. For example, with

values in this range and the opponents' suit stopped, simply bid 3NT instead of doubling.

Here is a useful example from the 2010 Rosenblum Cup. You hold as South, neither vulnerable:

♠ Q 7 ♥ 10 5 ♦ A J 7 ♣ K Q 10 8 5 3

The bidding heats up quickly:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	1♠	4♥	?

South doubled. He had an opening bid, but didn't have three-card spade support, otherwise he would probably have simply tried 4♠. The full deal:

	♠ A 8 6 5 4 3	
	♥ —	
	♦ Q 9 4 2	
	♣ J 7 2	
♠ K J		♠ 10 9 2
♥ Q 9 8 4 3 2		♥ A K J 7 6
♦ 10 5 3		♦ K 8 6
♣ A 6		♣ 9 4
	♠ Q 7	
	♥ 10 5	
	♦ A J 7	
	♣ K Q 10 8 5 3	

The bidding wasn't over. North, armed with this information, still had a decision to make. He probably considered bidding 5♦. He 'knows' partner has at most two spades and three hearts. He rates to have four diamonds, and maybe more. But he made the winning percentage call of passing, although as it turns out 4♠ is a fortunate make.

On the flip side here is a hand from a recent club team game. You hold as South, neither side vulnerable:

♠ J 5 4 3 ♥ Q J 8 5 ♦ A 8 7 ♣ 5 3

The bidding is at the four-level after two bids:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♠	4♥	?

Pass! You are not strong enough to bid 4♠. A double of 4♥ would be acceptable if it were for penalty, but it isn't. If North reopens with a double I would pass and take my likely +300. At the table my partner doubled as South. This should show something like

♠ 3 2 ♥ 4 3 2 ♦ K Q 5 2 ♣ K Q 4 3

with convertible values for offense or defense. I passed over 4♥ as this was a new partnership. It's a good thing I did, as the full deal was:

	♠ A 9 8 6 2	
	♥ A 4	
	♦ 6	
	♣ Q 10 8 7 2	
♠ K Q 10 7		♠ —
♥ —		♥ K 10 9 7 6 3 2
♦ Q J 10 9 5		♦ K 4 3 2
♣ K J 9 6		♣ A 4
	♠ J 5 4 3	
	♥ Q J 8 5	
	♦ A 8 7	
	♣ 5 3	

Playing 4♠ or 5♣ would not have been fun!

Tip 30: Preempts work. When partner makes a call after a preempt, whether it's a negative double or a bid, remember he may not have the

perfect hand; often he must choose between extremes, such as passing or bidding game.

Tip 31: If you have a weak hand and the opponents have jumped to game, don't double with something like KQ10x in their suit and nothing else. Partner will play you for 10+ points that are good for offense or defense. Pass with this kind of hand. If partner reopens with a double you will happily pass. If not, take your 50 or 100 per trick.

# WHEN WE OPEN A MINOR AND THE OPPONENTS BID THE OTHER ONE

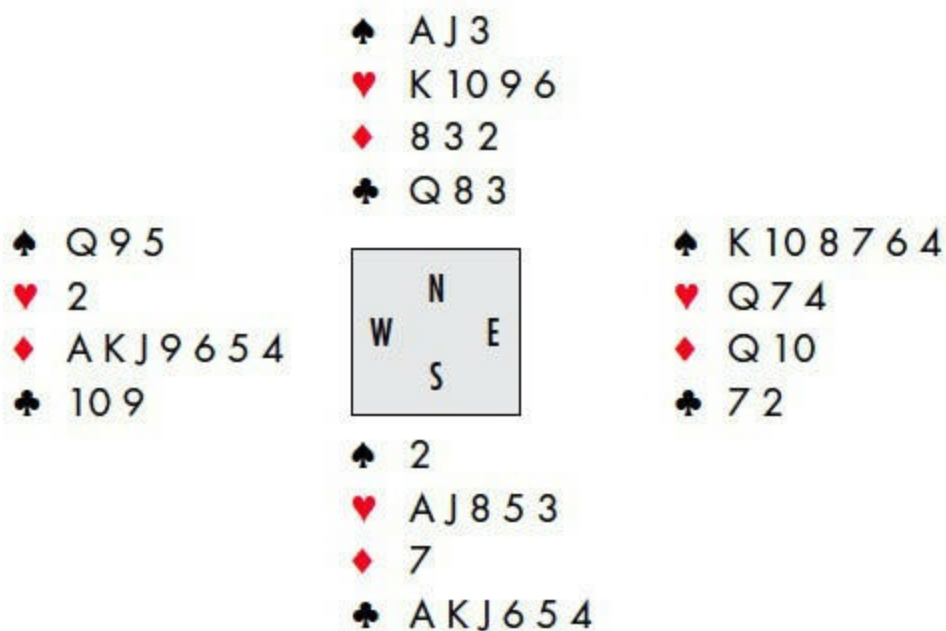
First let's deal with the less complicated situation:

LHO	PARTNER	RHO	YOU
	1♣	1♦	?

Here a double should promise at least 4-4 in the majors. When you are 5-4 or 4-5 in the majors, it depends on your strength. With a minimum I would make a negative double and likely not take another call. With invitational values I would usually bid my five-card suit (see the next section).

With 4-2 or 4-3 in the majors, simply bid your major. Time after time experience has demonstrated that this is the best way to handle this distribution. If you don't bid your major you could be preempted out of the auction, whereas a negative double may commit you too high when partner expects both majors. Here is an example from the CNTC, where a different type of advantage from bidding 1♥ is exemplified:

2010 CNTC, neither vul.



WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♦	1♥	1♠	1♣
5♦	5♥*	pass	4NT
all pass			6♥

After an overcall of 1♦, I bid 1♥ (practicing what I preach). Partner aggressively used Keycard Blackwood, and then put me in 6♥. His thinking was we had at least a nine-card heart fit, which would increase the chances of finding the ♥Q, especially with the opponents' helpful bidding. I did indeed pick up the ♥Q on my left, for an 11-IMP gain.

# WHEN TO MAKE A NEGATIVE DOUBLE AND WHEN TO MAKE A 2/1 CALL

When the opposition interferes over your side's opening bid, you lose valuable bidding space, so you must improvise. The two common ways to express your hand are through negative doubles and a natural 2/1. The common way to play a 2/1 in competition is 10+ HCP and a five-card or longer suit. The 2/1 bidder is required to make one more bid, and the only non-forcing calls by him are 2NT and rebidding his suit.

Tip 32: Always make a 2/1 bid in a five-card minor when you have enough points to commit to game, even if you have four cards in an unbid major. You can always bid your four-card major on the next round of bidding.

So the decision whether to bid a suit or make a negative double occurs in three common situations:

- When you are at least 4-5 (or 5-4) in the majors with around 10 points.
- You have one long major, and fewer than 10 HCP.
- You have enough points, but no major.

## WHEN YOU ARE AT LEAST 4-5 (OR 5-4) IN THE MAJORS WITH AROUND 10 POINTS

I think the extra playing strength of a five-card suit is worth showing. Partner should continue to bid his hand naturally. This works well for hands that are 4-5 as partner can bid spades without increasing the level.

2009 World Championships, N-S vul. You hold as South:

♠ K 9 6 2 ♥ A Q 9 7 6 ♦ 5 4 ♣ 9 2



WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♦	2♣	?

Now 2♥ was the preferred call at most of the tables where the auction was reported. One of the key attributes of this hand is the high-card location and structure. The AQ is in your five-card suit, and your king is in your four-card suit. Compare this to:

♠ J 9 6 2 ♥ Q 9 7 6 5 ♦ J 4 ♣ K Q

With five spades and four hearts it is a much harder decision, as you might not be able to bid the hearts at a safe level.

Tip 33: When deciding whether to upgrade your hand, look at:

- Where your high cards are located, and
- Whether they are aces and kings or quacks

YOU HAVE ONE LONG MAJOR, AND FEWER THAN 10 HCP

Let's discuss this by means of a quiz. Say the bidding starts:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♦	1♠	?

On which of the following hands would you make a negative double?

a) ♠ K 9 6 2 ♥ A Q 9 7 6 ♦ 5 4 ♣ 9 2  
 b) ♠ Q 6 2 ♥ A Q 9 7 6 ♦ 5 4 ♣ 9 4 2  
 c) ♠ 6 2 ♥ A Q 9 7 6 ♦ K 9 6 4 ♣ 4 2  
 d) ♠ 2 ♥ A Q 9 7 6 ♦ K 9 6 5 4 ♣ 4 2  
 e) ♠ 2 ♥ A Q 9 7 6 ♦ Q 9 6 5 4 ♣ 4 2  
 f) ♠ 2 ♥ A Q 9 6 ♦ A K 7 3 ♣ 9 6 4 2  
 g) ♠ 2 ♥ J 10 9 6 ♦ A 9 7 3 ♣ 9 6 4 2  
 h) ♠ 6 2 ♥ Q 10 9 7 6 2 ♦ K 4 ♣ K 2

- a. I would bid 2♥. There are a couple of things this hand has going for it:
  - Your ♠K is almost for sure working.
  - High card structure and location.
- b. Double. Not strong enough for 2♥.
- c. Double. The problem with bidding 2♥ is that if you later support diamonds it is game-forcing. Better to make a negative double and invite in diamonds.
- d. Here the fifth diamond tips the scale — bid 2♥.
- e. Double — queen versus the king in partner's suit this time, but so close.
- f. Double, even with game-forcing values. You need a fifth heart for a 2/1.
- g. Pass — not strong enough. At the one-level, absolutely you should double.
- h. Here the best strategy is to bid and rebid hearts. Partner will raise with the right hand. There are too many minimum high-card hands for partner, with two or three hearts, opposite which you could make game; e.g.

♠ 7 4 3 ♥ K J 3 ♦ A 10 9 8 6 ♣ A 3

## YOU HAVE ENOUGH POINTS, BUT NO MAJOR

These are tough hands. You have enough points to compete but making a double without the promised major is asking for trouble. One option is to play negative doubles that are more value based, instead of 100% promising the other major. I have never been a fan of this type of bidding. Hands with sufficient points to compete, but lacking the unbid major, are less common, and I think it is wiser to maintain that a negative double 100% promises the other major at the one- and two-levels.

So if the bidding started:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♦	1♣	?
♠ 7 4 3 2   ♥ K J 3   ♦ J 6   ♣ Q 9 6 3			

I would pass.

♠ 7 4 3 2   ♥ K J 3   ♦ J 8 7 6   ♣ K 3

I would raise diamonds, according to my system.

♠ 4 2   ♥ K J 3   ♦ J 6 3   ♣ A J 10 9 6

I would bid 2♣.

♠ 4 2   ♥ K J 3   ♦ J 6 3   ♣ A 9 7 6 2

I would likely break my rule and double. Why on this hand and not on the first example?

- I have a much better high-card hand.
- I have a partial diamond fit.
- Most importantly, if we end up in hearts the short trump hand will be ruffing spades, not the hand with four trumps.

# SUBSEQUENT BIDDING BY OPENER

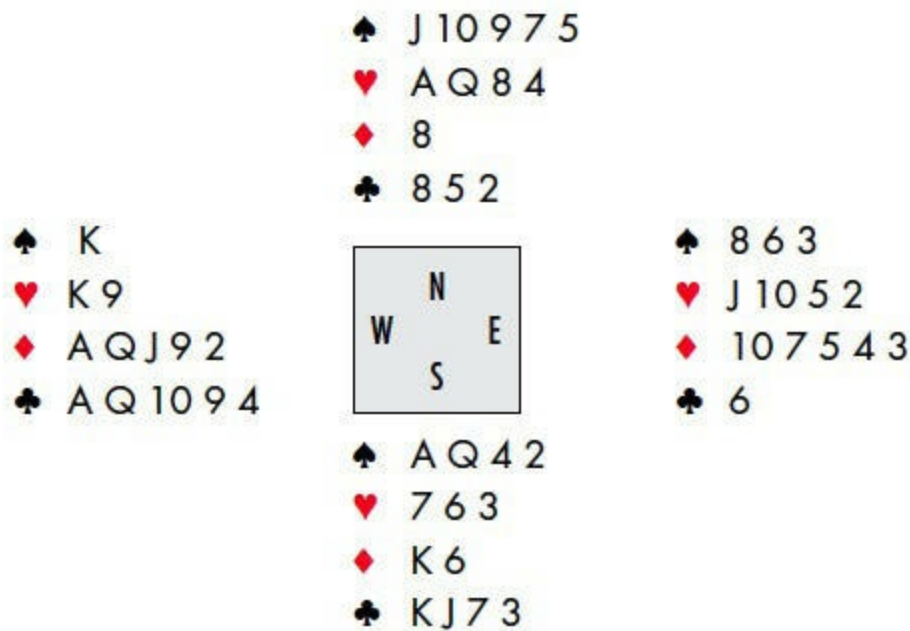
## WHEN THERE IS A NEGATIVE DOUBLE

The rules are not very complicated. If you have a fit you bid the unbid major to the level you are comfortable with, based on the level of partner's negative double. A common trap to avoid as opener is bidding too high with a fit, but a minimum:

2010 World Mixed Pairs. Both vul., as South you hold:

♠ A Q 4 2   ♥ 7 6 3   ♦ K 6   ♣ K J 7 3			
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♦	dbl	3♦	1♣ ?

Even if partner promises both majors you have a minimum opening bid. Pass, even though it is a good minimum. The problem with bidding is that partner will expect a better offensive hand for spades. On the actual deal (hands rotated) the bidding continued:



WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♦	dbl	3♦	1♣
5♦	5♠	pass	3♠
dbl	all pass		pass

Even at matchpoints, I think 3♠ is wrong. You have a partner who can compete further with more values (see next chapter). The final damage was -500, worth 20 out of 414 matchpoints to North-South!

As opener, with both majors you can cuebid to ensure you get to the right suit. The caution is to have the corresponding values (which partner will expect), as you are committing your side to one level higher.

## IN THE ABSENCE OF A NEGATIVE DOUBLE

When partner/responder doesn't make a negative double he has one of three general hand types:

- A hand too weak to make a negative double, with or without a four-card major,
- A penalty double of the overcall, or
- A hand with some values but too weak for a direct bid.

*A hand too weak to make a negative double, with or without a four-card major*

Neither vul., as North you hold:

♠ A K Q 3 ♥ 10 ♦ K Q 10 ♣ Q J 10 9 6

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♣	2♥	pass
3♥	dbl	pass	4♠
pass	?		

What do you bid?

Pass. Partner didn't make a negative double, so cannot have enough for slam! South's hand from a 2010 Winnipeg Sectional where some pairs bid too much:

♠ J 10 8 6 5 2 ♥ J 7 6 ♦ 2 ♣ A 8 4

*A penalty double of the overcall*

This is a very important subject that I feel strongly about. My views on it differ from those of some of my peers.

Let's say partner opens 1♦ and RHO overcalls 1♠, and you hold

♠ A K 10 9 7 ♥ A 3 2 ♦ 2 ♣ K Q 5 2

Playing negative doubles, you cannot directly penalize the opponents if you have a pure penalty double. If you pass, with most hands, your partner should reopen with a double. This is an area in which many players seem to have little discipline. In effect what they are saying by not reopening with a double is, 'I don't trust my partner to decide when to convert my balancing double, so in effect I am pulling his double before he gets a chance to make one!'

Tip 34: When partner passes an overcall of your opening bid, reopen with a double if you have three or fewer cards in that suit, even if you have a minimum.

Many times I have seen one player intend to penalize an overcall, but not get the chance because their partner refused to reopen with a double. Any time I have a 'normal' opener, with average or better defensive values, I will reopen with a double. If my partner does not have a penalty double he can bid a suit, bid 1NT or go back to the suit I bid initially. Quite often I will have shortness in the overcaller's suit, but I double with as many as three. Why so many?

I believe you must give partner a chance to double for penalties. Do not try to prejudge partner's holding in the opponent's bid suit. Trust partner to convert when it is appropriate. If I have opened with any normal, non-extreme shape I will double ('normal' includes 1=4=5=3, 1=4=6=2, 1=2=5=5, 0=4=5=4 and 0=4=6=3 after a 1♠ overcall). Other experts are not as black and white when deciding whether to reopen with a double.

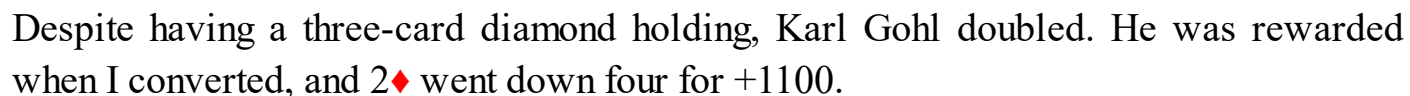
One reason that is often given for not reopening with a double is 'extra shape'. Here is a hand from a recent NABC Life Master Pairs that displays what can be missed with this mentality:

Matchpoints, E-W vul.

<div> <div>♠ 3</div> <div>♥ KJ87632</div> <div>♦ Q6</div> <div>♣ AK3</div> </div>			
<div>♠ 106</div> <div>♥ Q9</div> <div>♦ KJ10954</div> <div>♣ J82</div>	<div>W N E</div> <div>S</div>	<div>♠ KQ972</div> <div>♥ A4</div> <div>♦ 82</div> <div>♣ 10954</div>	
<div>♠ AJ854</div> <div>♥ 105</div> <div>♦ A73</div> <div>♣ Q76</div>			
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♥	1♠	pass
pass	2♥	pass	3NT
all pass			

South rightly deduced that she was better off doubling 1♠ for penalties at this

In fact, 1♠ would have gone down two for +500, and a complete top. Here is a hand from a Winnipeg Sectional. E-W vul., playing teams:



Tip 35: If responder passes an overcall, and then doubles a bid by



advancer (partner of the overcaller), it shows a penalty double of the overcaller's suit.

Two other points worth noting about this type of double:

- It says nothing about length in the advancer's bid suit.
- It says 'I have at least invitational values that are good for defense or offense'.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
2♣	1♥ pass	1♠ pass	pass dbl

This double shows a penalty double of spades. West is probably running to a long suit with a void or singleton in spades. South will have something like

♠ A Q 10 9 5 ♥ K 6 ♦ J 8 3 ♣ J 9 2

or better.

Let's say instead South held

♠ K J 10 8 7 5 ♥ 6 ♦ J 3 2 ♣ Q 10 2

On this auction:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	1♥ dbl	1♠ pass	pass ?

Here you would convert the reopening double to penalty. But if we go back to the previous example:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
2♣	1♥ pass	1♠ pass	pass ?

Since you do not have invitational-plus values all you can do is pass 2♣, or if you feel brave, bid a natural 2♠.

*A hand with some values but too weak for a direct bid*

This happens often. Partner opens the bidding with 1♣, RHO overcalls 1♠ and you have something like

♠ 8 6 5 2 ♥ J 7 ♦ A Q 9 8 5 4 ♣ 4

You pass, LHO passes, and partner doubles. Unless you play some type of Lebensohl treatment, where 2♦ is constructive, you have to bid 3♦. More on this theme in the next chapter.

# RESPONSIVE DOUBLES

The rules where partner doubles an opening bid and RHO raises or bids a different suit are very similar to those for negative doubles.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♦	dbl	1♠	dbl

Most players nowadays play that South's double in the above auction shows sufficient values to compete at the two-level along with four hearts. However, some play that the double denies four hearts, since you could just bid hearts if you have them. The key thing is to have an agreement with partner, and to have sufficient values for the level to which you are competing.

Also, the higher the opponents bid the more the responsive double is about points and implies lack of primary support for partner's implied suit (here, hearts). As with negative doubles, judgment is required. Here is a perfect example:

2009 Venice Cup. N-S vul., you hold as South

♠ A J 8 5   ♥ K 7 6   ♦ J 3   ♣ J 9 8 2			
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♣	1♦	pass 2♣	pass ?

As is common in high level bridge, everyone is bidding and you have 10 HCP. It is important that you reach any possible vulnerable game, so you need to enter the auction. In Chapter 10 we will look more closely at the importance of showing your values. Here, the responsive double is the best choice. You would like to have both majors, but you were only dealt one. What about 2NT? No, you are not strong enough: opposite a one-level overcall you need at least an opening bid.

West redoubles to show a good hand and partner bids 2♥.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1 ♣	1 ♦	pass	pass
redbl	2 ♥	2 ♣	dbl
		pass	?

Now what? Could partner also have four spades?

To answer the second question first, possible but unlikely. That would give her 4=4=5=0 shape and she would assuredly have made a takeout double with most 10+ HCP hands. Back to the first question... what to do? Do not pass, which is what South did in this match. The correct bid is 3♦. Why?

- It is better to play in a 5-2 or 6-2 than a 4-3. Club leads will tap the long trump hand and declarer won't be able to enjoy her diamonds.
- Game, although unlikely, is still a possibility.

What about 2NT? No, still not strong enough. North held

♠ 7 3 ♥ J 10 4 3 ♦ A K 10 9 7 5 ♣ 5

# Chapter 7

# DOUBLES 1.0

This chapter is about what I would like to say is basic stuff. But my experience has shown that players have a general disregard for sound fundamentals in making these doubles. Again this is only my personal view on what I 'know' and what I have seen.

The purpose of this chapter is twofold: first, to help you develop better judgment as to when to make various doubles, and second, to expose you to some new applications that may be of benefit in your bidding development.

# TAKEOUT DOUBLES

## DOUBLE, OVERCALL, OR NEITHER?

At the one-level the initial meaning of a takeout double is a hand with an opening bid and support for all unbid suits. However, a double is also the first action on hands that are too strong to overcall at the one-level. You must first double and then if partner (advancer) makes a minimum response, bid your suit at the minimum level. If I held

♠ A K J ♥ A Q ♦ A Q 10 7 6 5 ♣ 9 6

and RHO opened 1♣, I would double and then bid diamonds to show somewhere around 17-21 points.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	pass	1♣	dbl
pass	1♠	pass	2♦

What if your hand was even stronger?

Then you would double and either:

1. cuebid clubs, opener's suit, or
2. jump in your suit.

1) Cuebid opener's suit

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	pass	1♣	dbl
pass	1♠	pass	2♣

2) Jump in your suit

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	pass	1♣	dbl
pass	1♠	pass	3♦

The former suggests a hand on which you would like to make a forcing bid on the next round of bidding. The latter is highly, highly invitational.

Nevertheless, although the double may be a prelude to describing other hand types, you make your first response assuming partner has the basic hand: an opening bid and support for the unbid suits.

Okay, that was easy — now what? Whoa! Lots to talk about. First a quiz.

With which of these hands would you make a takeout double of 1♦?

- a) ♠A J 8 5 ♥K 7 6 2 ♦8 2 ♣A Q 3
- b) ♠A J 8 5 ♥K 7 6 2 ♦A Q 3 ♣8 2
- c) ♠A J 8 5 ♥K J 7 6 2 ♦2 ♣A Q 3
- d) ♠A J 8 5 ♥K J 7 6 2 ♦2 ♣A 8 3
- e) ♠A J 8 5 ♥K 7 2 ♦9 8 2 ♣A Q 3
- f) ♠A J 8 5 ♥K 7 2 ♦A 8 3 ♣9 8 2
- g) ♠Q J 8 5 ♥K 7 2 ♦Q 8 2 ♣K Q 3
- h) ♠A J 8 5 ♥J 7 6 2 ♦2 ♣A 8 7 3
- i) ♠A J 8 5 ♥J 7 6 2 ♦— ♣A 8 7 4 3
- j) ♠A J 8 5 4 ♥J 7 6 2 ♦— ♣A 8 7 3

I will give you my choices in a minute. But first I would like to acknowledge that there are different bidding styles. Some players like to have certain values and distribution while others will bid on any hand that comes close. The latter argue that it is better to get in early even if your hand is imperfect. The traditionalists say that when you do double, partner will know what you have in terms of high cards and distribution and can make any bid with confidence.

My philosophy is that you win in bidding with a sound style that is disciplined. Otherwise it becomes a guessing game. I don't want my partnerships to be like that. This philosophy I temper with the experience that if you don't get in the auction early, you may never get in. My suggested answers and comments:



a. ♠ A J 8 5 ♥ K 7 6 2 ♦ 8 2 ♣ A Q 3

Yes, easy.

b. ♠ A J 8 5 ♥ K 7 6 2 ♦ A Q 3 ♣ 8 2

Yes. I will pass any club bid by partner and hope. My partner and I have discussed this hand type.

c. ♠ A J 8 5 ♥ K J 7 6 2 ♦ 2 ♣ A Q 3

No. I will overcall 1♥ with this hand.

*I would* make a double with

♠ A J 8 5 ♥ J 8 7 6 2 ♦ A Q 3 ♣ 2

Here I don't want to emphasize hearts or encourage a heart lead if we end up on defense. On this example, I am really treating ♥J8762 as a four-card suit.

d. ♠ A J 8 5 ♥ K J 7 6 2 ♦ 2 ♣ A 8 3

No. In my view this is an extremely close decision between 1♥ and double. Vulnerable, I double; not vulnerable, I prefer to show my five-card suit.

e. ♠ A J 8 5 ♥ K 7 2 ♦ 9 8 2 ♣ A Q 3

Yes. Bad shape but good values. Any less values and I would pass with this shape.

f. ♠ A J 8 5 ♥ K 7 2 ♦ A 8 3 ♣ 9 8 2

Pass. The only exception is not vulnerable at matchpoints.

g. ♠ Q J 8 5 ♥ K 7 2 ♦ Q 8 2 ♣ K Q 3

Never. If I get a chance I may balance, depending on the suits the opponents bid.

h. ♠ A J 8 5 ♥ J 7 6 2 ♦ 2 ♣ A 8 7 3

This is a much better hand to double on than either (f) or (g). Matchpoints, yes. IMPs, yes. Much harder for partner to come in with, let's say, 14 HCP and some 4-3-3-3 shape.

i. ♠ A J 8 5 ♥ J 7 6 2 ♦ — ♣ A 8 7 4 3

Yes.

j. ♠ A J 8 5 4 ♥ J 7 6 2 ♦ — ♣ A 8 7 3

No. I would overcall 1♠.

## DOUBLE OR OVERCALL 1NT?

This is another choice that we face often, and there are a variety of criteria to help decide what to do:

*Did the opponents open a major or a minor?*

If they opened 1♠ I would double with

♠ K J ♥ A K Q ♦ K 8 6 2 ♣ J 10 4 2

The reasoning is that not only do I have support for all unbid suits but I only have one spade stopper. Against opponents who play five-card majors, one lead will likely set up their suit, and they will have an entry to run it. However I would bid 1NT if they opened any other suit. I have three stoppers in hearts, and a minor will often be only a three- or four-card suit.

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Tip 36: Take a look at the opponents' notrump range. If they play weak notrumps and open a minor they will either be balanced with 15+ HCP or unbalanced. If you detect the latter, their minor will likely be at least five in length.

### *Holding the other major*

If the opponents open a major and I have four in the other major, I will double with 0-1 stoppers in their major, and overcall 1NT with two stoppers. Partner can still use Stayman if he has four of the other major.

### *What is my hand like?*

If I have aces then my hand will usually play better in a suit contract, whereas if my tricks are slow the preference should be given to 1NT.

With imperfect hands I recommend maintaining partnership discipline by passing and if appropriate, balancing later (assuming this is your style).

## TAKEOUT DOUBLES AND CAPTAINCY

'Captaincy' is a term used to describe who will decide how high to bid in competitive and invitational sequences. Quite often this responsibility is shared by the partners. However, sometimes there is a clear captain, and a takeout double auction is one such situation.

Tip 37: If you have made a takeout double within the minimum HCP range, all future decisions will usually be made by the advancer.

It is a simple concept but often abused, even by the best:

2009 Bermuda Bowl

E-W vul.

	♠ 10	
	♥ A Q 4 2	
	♦ 9 6 4	
	♣ A 9 7 4 3	
♠ Q J 9 4 2	<div> <div>W</div> <div>N</div> <div>E</div> <div>S</div> </div>	♠ A 8 6
♥ —		♥ 9 8 7 3
♦ J 10 2		♦ A K 5 3
♣ K Q 10 6 2		♣ 8 5
	♠ K 7 5 3	
	♥ K J 10 6 5	
	♦ Q 8 7	
	♣ J	

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♠	dbl	pass	pass
4♠	5♥	2♥ <sup>1</sup>	4♥
		dbl	all pass

1. Spade raise.

North's lack of discipline cost his side a 23-IMP swing! They lost 12 IMPs when 4♠ went down three undoubled at the other table. If he had passed, South would have certainly doubled 4♠ and possibly scored the same tricks for +800 and an 11-IMP gain.

Here is another fall from grace, but this time for the opposite reason. This deal is from the 2009 Wagar:

		♠ J 8 ♥ K Q 3 ♦ 10 8 3 ♣ A K Q 8 4	
♠ K Q 10 7 5 ♥ A 10 8 ♦ K 5 ♣ 9 3 2	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">           N W       E S         </div>	♠ A 6 3 ♥ J 4 ♦ Q 9 6 4 ♣ J 10 6 5	
		♠ 9 4 2 ♥ 9 7 6 5 2 ♦ A J 7 2 ♣ 7	
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♠	dbl	2♠	3♥
pass	4♥	all pass	

North decided over 1♠ that her hand was worth only one call and reasonably chose a double (I prefer 2♣, so there is no disaster if East bids 3NT over my double, and partner leads a red suit). But then she broke discipline by raising her partner's competitive 3♥ call to game. Yes, there are times when this action could be right when you have extra values. Here, the extra HCP are easily offset by the lack of shape and minimum trump support. Declarer went down three — fortunately the opponents didn't double, but that was still -300.

## HIGHER LEVELS

### *Two- and three-level doubles*

When the opponents preempt at the two- or three-level, the risk of entering the auction is greater, so you usually need more values. The exception is when you are short in the suit in which the opponents preempted. Over 2♥ and 3♥ I would make a takeout double with any of these hands:

♠ K Q 10 5   ♥ 8   ♦ K 8 7 5   ♣ A 9 3 2  
 ♠ K Q 10 5   ♥ —   ♦ J 8 7 5 4   ♣ A 9 3 2  
 ♠ K Q 5   ♥ 8 7 2   ♦ K 8 7   ♣ A K 9 3

I would also double with

♠ K Q 5   ♥ 8 7   ♦ K 8 7 5   ♣ A 9 3 2

but pass is a close second choice.

However, with:

♠ K Q 5   ♥ 8 7 2   ♦ K 8 7   ♣ A 9 3 2

I would pass.

Tip 38: If possible, the hand with shortness in the preempting suit should try to enter the auction, because it is much more difficult for the 'balanced' hand to do so.

## RESPONDING TO TAKEOUT DOUBLES AT THE TWO- AND THREE-LEVEL

As we discussed earlier, partner is under pressure when having to bid after preempts. A takeout double may be made on a less than perfect hand, but partner judges that to be the best of the possible choices. At the two-level we have the Lebensohl convention to help distinguish advancer's relative high-card strength.

At the three-level I like to play that there is an assumption that advancer has around 8 HCP. What this means is that with this holding or less you would usually just bid your best suit at the minimum level. Obviously, the more extreme your distribution the more your hand is worth. Here is an example of what to do with what may be seen as a borderline hand.

N-S vul., as South you hold:

♠ A ♥ Q 8 5 2 ♦ Q 9 8 4 3 ♣ 10 6 5

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
3♣	dbl	pass	?

What do you bid at matchpoints? At IMPs?

Let's start by talking about some general principles in this situation. The doubler is likely to pass any minimum bid, so you are placing the contract.

At matchpoints it is important to play in the higher scoring denomination, hearts. The question is whether to bid 3♥ or 4♥. You have roughly an invitational hand, but unfortunately the preempt has taken this option away from you. You must make your best guess. On the plus side you have no wasted club strength, a ruffing value and a second suit to develop, knowing partner is *likely* to have 3+ diamonds. On the minus side your heart spots are poor and East is likely to be able to overruff clubs, or discard if you ruff high, thus promoting his higher heart spot cards.

On balance, 3♥ seems to me the best call at pairs scoring.

At IMPs, there is a big premium for bidding games. As well, diamonds might play better than hearts. In fact if you decide, very reasonably, not to try for game, you should bid 3♦ as it is likely the best partscore. If you want to play in game, I would go for 4♥. Ten tricks are easier than eleven! The question is what to do. Let's look at some possible hands for partner:

- a) ♠ Q J 6 5 ♥ A K 7 6 ♦ K 5 2 ♣ 8 3
- b) ♠ K Q J 6 ♥ 7 6 4 3 ♦ A K 5 2 ♣ 3
- c) ♠ Q J 6 5 2 ♥ A K 7 6 ♦ A 2 ♣ 8 3
- d) ♠ J 8 7 2 ♥ A 7 6 ♦ A K J 5 2 ♣ 8
- e) ♠ Q J 6 ♥ A K 7 6 ♦ K J 5 2 ♣ A 3
- f) ♠ J 6 5 4 ♥ A K 7 6 ♦ A K J 5 2 ♣ —

The preferable contracts opposite the South hand are:

- a) 3♥
- b) 3♥ or 4♦
- c) 3♥
- d) 5♦
- e) 4♥
- f) 6♥

With the last two hands partner should raise to 4♥ if you bid 3♥. The reason is that on *average* the partner of the doubler will have about 7-8 HCP and these example hands have extra values. To answer the question, taking all things into account I think 3♥ is the best call on the South hand, unless you are desperate or an excellent declarer! But before you bid:

- Consider where the high cards will be to determine if finesses are likely to work.
- Consider the likely bad breaks, and look carefully at how good your spot cards are in the key suits.
- Consider the vulnerability. This should give you information on how good the preemptor's hand is (if you're still not sure, ask his partner about their overall preempting style!). The vulnerability also affects your potential reward if you bid and make game.
- The doubler will often bid game when he has extras, as he can usually count on you for some points, usually 7-8. The reason is that with 15+ HCP the partner of the preemptor might take some action. So giving the preemptor 6 and the preemptor's partner at most 14, you should have 7+. This is very approximate, of course.
- Remember that the doubler might go on to game with extras. If you jump to 4♥ you show extra values, possibly as much as a 13-count. With a good 13+ HCP hand, you should cuebid 4♣. This says to partner, 'I have enough for game, and if you have extras we might have a slam. Bid your suits up the line, or cuebid or jump with slam aspirations.' Note that 4♣ does not promise a club control (see Chapter 10).

By thinking about these issues in advance you are more likely to make the best bid, and do it in tempo.

## FOUR-LEVEL DOUBLES

Traditional teaching says that a double of an opening 4♥ is optional, while a double for



4♠ is more for penalty. I am okay with these definitions. I expect the values of a strong notrump or better. The one caveat I would make is that I believe that 4NT is the correct bid on any hand with a void in the suit opened. Otherwise it is just too difficult for partner to make the right decision.

Tip 39: A pull of partner's double of 4♥ or 4♠ is usually played as constructive, expecting to make the contract opposite an average 16-19 HCP. With a weak hand and a long suit, pass and hope partner can beat the contract. Even if you can't, -590 is better than -1100.

Here is a deal from a recent tournament:

Both vul., playing teams, you hold as South

♠ 9 8   ♥ 9 2   ♦ A J 10 7 6 5   ♣ J 10 4			
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
4♥	dbl	pass	?

I think this decision is easy: pass. If partner has,

♠ K Q 5   ♥ 8 7 2   ♦ K 8 7   ♣ A K 9 3

both 4♥ and 5♦ are each likely to be down two. What partner actually held was

♠ Q J 10 5   ♥ —   ♦ K 8 7   ♣ A K 9 8 7 3

Now both contracts made, and we were -790 instead of +600.

So the following tip is one that I have recently learned for myself and is still subject to the test of future successes and failures. But I do believe that the best approach is:

Tip 40: With a void in the four-level preempt suit bid 4NT for takeout. Double is better when you have a more balanced hand.



# BALANCING DOUBLES

I discussed balancing judgment in my first book. Rather than repeat what I said then, I would like to add some suggestions on what to think about prior to the balancing decision.

## THE ONE-LEVEL

If you have decided to balance, a double is usually better than an overcall when you are short in the opener's suit. The reason is that you can cater to partner having a trap pass, perhaps something like

♠ 7 ♥ AKQ ♦ KQJ982 ♣ K42

after a 1♦ opening by the opponents.

I will balance with a double with as little as 8 HCP. There are two important considerations when deciding to balance with a weaker hand. First, if I am on the weaker side I will have good shape and try to have good values. An example might be

♠ A532 ♥ J10432 ♦ 6 ♣ K42

On the other hand with

♠ Q532 ♥ Q6532 ♦ J ♣ QJ4

I prefer a balance of 1♥. The other reason that I might not balance at all is no length in an unbid major.

Both vul., playing teams, you hold as South

♠ 3 ♥ Q 5 4 3 ♦ K 6 2 ♣ K J 10 5 4

The bidding starts:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	pass	pass	?

I have often seen players balance on this type of hand and see the bidding continue:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	pass	pass	2♣
dbl	pass	2♣	pass
3♠	pass	4♣	

With the full deal being something like:

	♠ 7 5	
	♥ K J	
	♦ J 10 8 5 4 3	
	♣ A Q 7	
♠ A K 8 2		♠ Q J 10 9 6 4
♥ A 10 9 8 7 2		♥ 6
♦ A Q		♦ 9 7
♣ 2		♣ 9 8 6 3
	♠ 3	
	♥ Q 5 4 3	
	♦ K 6 2	
	♣ K J 10 5 4	

Notice that I only gave the opponents 20 HCP, but 6♠ is cold! Another clue for passing 1♥ out is that partner, who is marked with some values, did not overcall 1♠.

Tip 41: Be wary of balancing when you are short in at least one of the

majors with moderate values, especially playing IMPs.

## THE TWO-LEVEL AND HIGHER

When the opponents open a weak two, or even if they open a two-bid that shows an opening bid, a balancing double is just that, balancing. It does not necessarily show full opening points, but can be as little as a 10 HCP (I and others even play it a point or two lower, with the perfect shape and maybe two aces) and shortness in the bid suit. Take the following auction:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
2♠	pass	pass	?

I would make a balancing double on any of the following hands:

♠ 2 ♥ A 7 6 4 2 ♦ A J 4 3 ♣ A 4 3  
♠ 2 ♥ A 7 6 2 ♦ A J 4 3 ♣ 7 6 3 2  
♠ 4 3 2 ♥ A 7 6 2 ♦ A J 4 ♣ K Q 2  
♠ 4 2 ♥ 7 6 2 ♦ A K 4 3 ♣ A K 3 2  
♠ 6 5 3 2 ♥ A 2 ♦ A J 4 ♣ A K Q 2  
♠ 6 5 3 2 ♥ 2 ♦ A K Q 4 ♣ A K Q 2

It is therefore important not to hang partner for his balance. Most players play a Lebensohl treatment to differentiate between constructive and weak replies to a *direct-seat* takeout double of a preempt. Bidding 2NT shows fewer than 8 points, forcing doubler to bid 3♣ in a prelude to signing off. A direct suit bid is constructive, showing 7-11 HCP. Lebensohl is an important tool. But what does it mean after a *balancing* double?

I think the Lebensohl point ranges need to be adjusted upwards. A direct bid could be as much as an opening bid, instead of the 7-11 as stated in the above paragraph. So in the auction:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	dbl	2♥ pass	pass 3♣

the 3♣ says, ‘Partner I have values here, around 9-13 HCP. I know you may be balancing so I don’t want to hang you for competing. If you have a minimum 8-11 HCP this is probably as high as we want to be. However, if you have more we may have a game.’

I chose the above auction as something similar happened to the Granovetters, and they discussed it in their enjoyable “Partnership Bridge” column in the *ACBL Bulletin*.

IMPs, both vul.

#### Matthew

♠ K J 9  
♥ 7 4  
♦ A 9 8 5 3  
♣ K J 3

#### Pamela

♠ A 5 4  
♥ 5 3 2  
♦ Q J  
♣ A Q 10 6 5

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	<i>Matthew</i>		<i>Pamela</i>
		2♥	pass
pass	dbl	pass	3♥
pass	4♦	pass	4♥
pass	4♠	all pass	

I give them full credit for sharing their disasters. The simple answer is for Pamela to bid 3♣ over the double to express her values. At matchpoints, passing 3♣ would be easy for North. Here, vulnerable at teams, Matthew has a close decision, but I still think pass is the right choice. As you can see, 5♣ is a below average proposition. Just as an aside, on the actual auction Pamela’s 4♥ bid shows a very good hand with diamond support — not exactly how I would describe her holding. If partner has more than a minimum, game is possible.

This deal came up in the 2009 Bermuda Bowl. Both vul., IMPs. You hold as South:

♠ 6 4 ♥ K 10 7 6 3 ♦ 10 ♣ K 8 6 5 4

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	dbl	2♣ <sup>1</sup> pass	pass ?

### 1. Precision.

South bid 3♥. I would agree with his bid if this were not a balancing double situation, but it was, so 2♥ is plenty with this hand. Despite partner having a full 14 HCP, 3♥ went down two. The full deal (hands rotated):

	♠ Q 9 2		
	♥ A Q 9 5		
	♦ K Q 3		
	♣ J 7 3		
♠ K J 10 3			♠ A 8 7 5
♥ 8 4 2			♥ J
♦ J 9 8 6 5 4			♦ A 7 2
♣ —			♣ A Q 10 9 2
	♠ 6 4		
	♥ K 10 7 6 3		
	♦ 10		
	♣ K 8 6 5 4		

If the doubler is a passed hand, as on this auction, responder needs to be even more careful:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass pass	pass dbl	2♠ pass	pass 3♥

South knows that North is limited to around 11 HCP and may have less. So his 3♥ bid should be based on more — at least opening points, something like

♠ 7 6 2 ♥ A 9 8 7 2 ♦ K Q 2 ♣ K 4



# PENALTY DOUBLES

In the modern game, opening bids and preempts are getting lighter and lighter, and that gives rise to more opportunities to apply the axe. However, judgment combined with knowledge of the opponent's style and your own must be considered when making this decision. There are two distinct levels of contract that can be doubled:

- Slams and games
- Partscores

## SLAMS AND GAMES

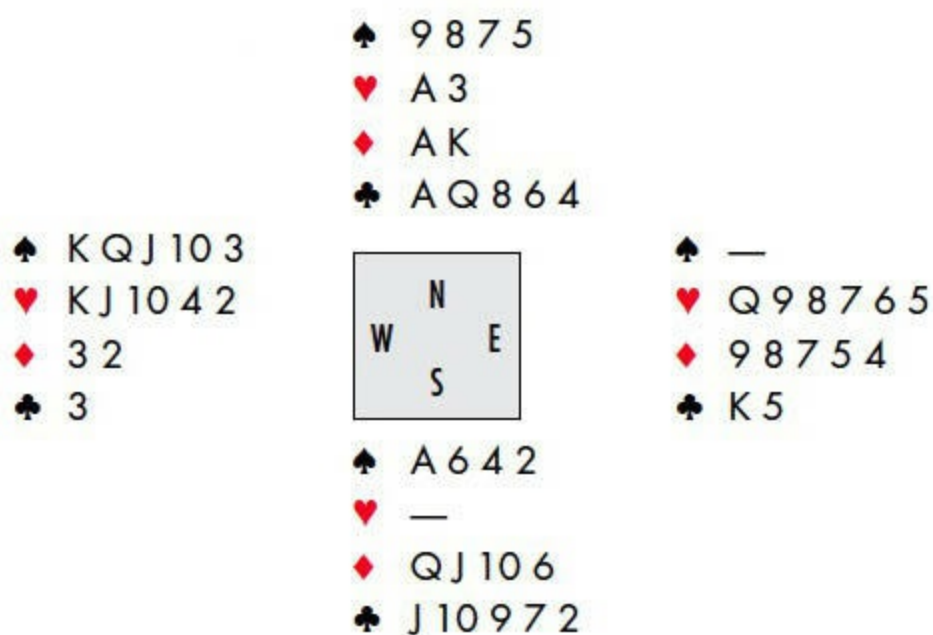
When deciding whether to double a game or slam there are five important questions to ask yourself:

- Am I prepared if the opponents run to notrump or a different suit?
- Will my double help declarer make the slam or game?
- Will my double change partner's lead from one I want to one I don't?
- Conversely, by doubling will partner find the lead I really want?
- Do I need to double to prevent my partner from sacrificing?

The latter four are self-explanatory, but the first one is a point that trips up a remarkable number of players, even at the top level. There are many deals where the opponents can run to a different contract that is makeable, from one that is not. Some examples of this are unbelievable! Here are just two of them (a third example comes a little later in the chapter):

1977 Winnipeg Regional

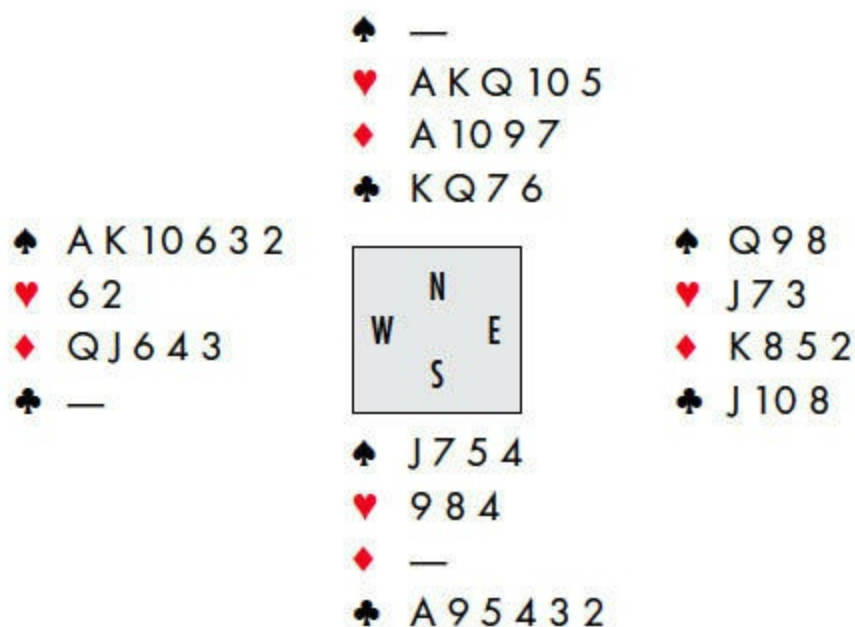
IMPs, both vul.



WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♣	pass	1♠
pass	4♠	pass	pass
dbl	pass	pass	5♣
dbl	all pass		

West traded in +200 for -750. He obviously did not ask himself the key question.

1997 European Championship, both vul.



WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♥	pass	1♠
2♠	4♠!	pass	pass!
dbl!	4NT	pass	5♣
pass	6♣	pass	7♣
all pass			

Yes, you are seeing right. West did give up +600 and traded it in for -2140!

## PARTSCORES

There are many opportunities to double the opponents in partscores. The first main factor affecting your decision at IMPs is whether you are doubling the opponents into game. Contracts of two of a major and higher fall into this category, as do lower level contracts if they are redoubled.

Some level of certainty or high probability is needed to make such a double. However, even if you make the right percentage call there will be times when the opponents will make their doubled contract. Sometimes this happens. This doesn't mean you shouldn't double ever again. But obviously you want to minimize these occurrences.

Let's look at some of the factors to consider when you are thinking of doubling a partscore.

**Expected trump fit.** The normal trump holding for a suit contract is an eight-card fit.

With a larger number of trumps than eight, they may be able to make more tricks than their combined high-card strength might suggest.

2010 World Open Pairs Final. Neither vul., sitting South you pick up

♠ A K 7 ♥ 10 9 8 2 ♦ 6 ♣ Q J 9 7 2

Partner opens a 12-14 1NT in fourth seat and East bid 2♦ for the majors. What do you do?

You have 10 HCP, 22-24 combined with partner. Game is unlikely. The opponents have at most one eight-card fit in spades, and a maximum of seven trumps in hearts. Double! The full deal:

♠ 6 5 2	♠ J 9 4	♠ Q 10 8 3
♥ 7 5 3	♥ Q 4	♥ A K J 6
♦ Q 10 8 3	♦ A K 9 5 4	♦ J 7 2
♣ K 10 3	♣ A 8 5	♣ 6 4

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ A K 7
♥ 10 9 8 2
♦ 6
♣ Q J 9 7 2

Instead of doubling, South invited game and North accepted with his maximum. Down two, -100, for 1 matchpoint out of 70. Meanwhile, +500 would have scored 65 matchpoints!

**A good four-card holding in the trump suit.** Opponents bid games (slams, etc...) based on a reasonable break in the trump suit. There is a big difference on defense between ♠K8 opposite partner's ♠Q93, and ♠KQ983 opposite a void. The first holding may be limited to one trick, while I would usually expect at least three tricks from the latter.

**High cards.** Around 20 HCP are needed to make a contract at the two-level, while on

average they need 23 to make a suit contract at the three-level, assuming a 4-4 trump fit.

**Distribution of high cards between hands.** It is always easier to declare or defend when your combined high-card total is fairly evenly split between the two hands. The more there are in one hand, the worse it is for declarer (or the harder it is to defend). This is true for a couple of reasons. First, there will be limited entries to lead cards from the weak hand. Secondly, if one partner has the majority of the high-card assets, he is more likely to be subject to squeezes and endplays, even as declarer! That is why there is a certain school of thought that says that if the bidding goes 2NT, pass, pass, to you, a double is a reasonable bet!

**A poor fit for partner's suit.** It's good to be short in partner's suit. Either you can get ruffs, or you can expect partner to take more defensive tricks in that suit than when you have, say, three-card support.

**Bad breaks in a secondary suit.** This is a point a lot of players miss. If, for example, you know that declarer will be depending on a second suit for a source tricks and that suit is not breaking, the hand will not play very well. This is even more true when the bad break is in the hand lying over the suit.

**Vulnerability.** This is an interesting factor. If you double the opposition, you want them to be vulnerable as the penalties are bigger; however, the opponents usually have better suits and hands when 'red'. Since the opponents will usually bid with fewer values and poorer suits when not vulnerable, the opportunity for a penalty is actually sometimes greater.

**Pressure bidding.** There is a big difference between the opponents following these two bidding sequences to arrive at 3♣:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	<i>Partner</i>		<i>You</i>
1♣	pass	1♠	pass
1NT	pass	2♣	pass
pass	2♥	pass	pass
3♣	pass	pass	?

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	<i>Partner</i>		<i>You</i>
	2♥	pass	pass
dbl	pass	3♣	?

In the first auction, the opponents were able to exchange a lot of information regarding their strength and suit length. They will have at least an eight-card trump fit, and very possibly nine.

In the second case they will often be in a seven-card fit — possibly even six. Here they were not given the luxury of exploratory bidding at the one- and two-levels.

**Form of scoring.** The risk-reward ratio is much more favorable for close doubles at matchpoints.

Obviously it will be some combination of these factors that will ultimately determine your final decision.

# LEAD-DIRECTING DOUBLES

Many times you are dying for a certain lead and you get a chance to double an artificial bid in that suit. (As seen in Chapter 5, I believe in using lead-directing bids in a number of different auctions.) This is all well and good. But there are a number of important considerations that go into this decision.

For one, are you ready for a redouble? At the NABC in Reno my partner and I were doubled a few times where we redoubled and made overtricks. One lead-directing double was made on AQ42! Risky business! In the Rosenblum Cup I opened 2♣, and LHO doubled me with ♣KQJ tripleton. If I hadn't forgotten to make our systemic bid we would have been in 2♣ doubled and redoubled making four!

Tip 42: When making a double of a low-level artificial bid, you should have values in addition to a five-card or longer suit.

1995 Macallan Pairs Championship, both vul.:

<p>♠ K 4 3 2</p> <p>♥ 9</p> <p>♦ Q J 8 6 5</p> <p>♣ J 7 2</p>	<p>♠ J 6 5</p> <p>♥ A K 5</p> <p>♦ A 10 9 7 2</p> <p>♣ A K</p> <div><div>W</div><div>N</div><div>E</div><div>S</div></div> <p>♠ 10 9</p> <p>♥ J 10 8 7 4</p> <p>♦ K 4 3</p> <p>♣ Q 6 5</p>	<p>♠ A Q 8 7</p> <p>♥ Q 6 3 2</p> <p>♦ —</p> <p>♣ 10 9 8 4 3</p>	
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
dbl	2NT redbl	pass all pass	3♦

West violated Tip 42 here, doubling purely on that diamond holding. East-West were -840 defending 3♦ redoubled, instead of +100 against 4♥.

## LIGHTNER DOUBLES

A Lightner double is used to alert the opening leader to the need for a specific and unusual lead, and is often made against a voluntarily-bid slam. It says one of two things:

- Lead the first-bid suit by the player to the right of the doubler, or
- The doubler has a void in an undisclosed suit and hopes partner can find it.

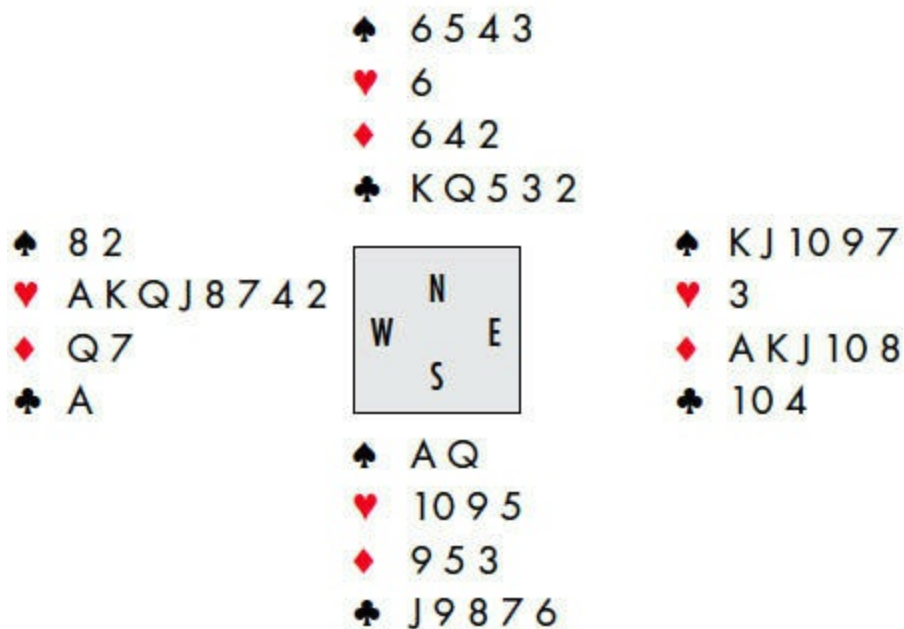
You hold as South



♠ A Q   ♥ 10 9 5   ♦ 9 5 3   ♣ J 9 8 7 6

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		1♠	pass
2♥	pass	3♦	pass
6♥	pass	pass	?

You want a spade lead. You are afraid that any spade losers will go on the diamond suit, as in this layout:



If you don't double, North will lead a club and declarer will make with an overtrick. Here is an example of wanting a ruff. You hold as South

♠ J 6 5   ♥ —   ♦ 10 8 7   ♣ K J 10 9 5 4 3

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			3♣
dbl	pass	4♣	pass
4♠	pass	6♠	?

If you pass, partner is probably going to lead a club. You want a heart lead. Double will alert partner that you have a void and now he has to guess between hearts and diamonds. You hope his holding will guide him to make the winning choice. Notice that you aren't even sure you will beat 6♠, even with the ruff. The only indicator is that the opponents didn't try for seven. In any case it is worth the risk.

Lightner doubles can be used below the slam level too. You hold as South

♠ J 6 5   ♥ A Q J 10 9 5   ♦ A 2   ♣ 10 7

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		1♥	pass
2♦	pass	3♦	pass
3NT	pass	pass	?

You want a heart lead. Doubling is the only way to get it (assuming partner has a heart!)

Lightner doubles are powerful weapons. Just remember, if you double a slam that was bid to make, partner will treat it as a Lightner situation. If you want partner to lead your suit, you must pass. The second danger is that you may double a slam you expect to beat, but the Lightner double prompts them to run to a makeable spot.

So there are two questions to ask yourself before doubling a slam:

- If partner is on lead, and treats the double as Lightner, will this reduce our chances of beating this contract?

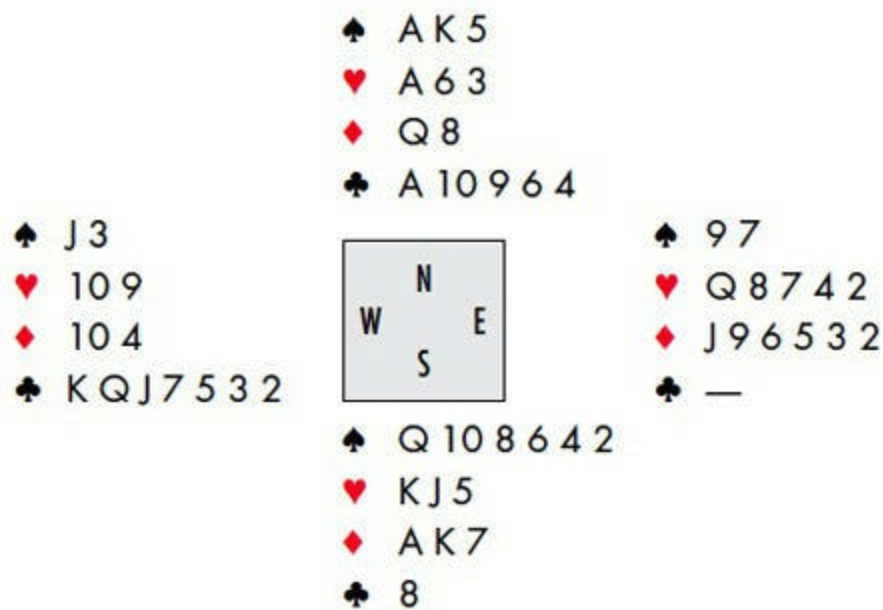
If yes, *don't double!*

- Will your double give declarer information that will let him make the slam, for example by playing you for all the high cards or all of the trumps?

If yes, *don't double!*

The questions above are equally applicable when deciding to double opponents who have voluntarily bid game.

N-S vul., 1979 Bermuda Bowl



WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		pass	1♠
3♣	dbl	pass	3♠
pass	4♣	pass	4♦
pass	4♥	pass	5NT
pass	7♣	pass	7♠
pass	pass	?	

Not only is East not prepared for a runout to 7NT, but a double here actually asks partner to lead something other than the suit he bid. East should pass. West has the inference that partner could have asked for an unusual lead by making a Lightner double, so should realize a club void in the East hand is possible, and simply lead the suit he bid.

# CONVERTING A TAKEOUT DOUBLE TO PENALTIES

This happens often. Partner makes a takeout double, and you convert to penalties. When you want to penalize LHO, you require length and good spots in his suit. Otherwise he will be able to come close or even make the contract by scoring his intermediate trumps. A trump lead is strongly indicated, if not mandatory (you hope partner has a trump to lead).

The other principle when you convert a takeout double to penalties is that if the opponents run to another suit, all subsequent doubles by either partner are for penalties. Don't let them off the hook if you've got them.

## DECIDING WHEN TO CONVERT THE REOPENING DOUBLE TO PENALTIES

In Chapter 6 we looked in some detail at reopening actions when partner has not made a negative double. Now let's look at it from the other side of the table.

WEST	PARTNER	EAST	YOU
	1♠	2♦	?

This is the moment when you have to decide whether your hand warrants a penalty double of 2♦ or not. There are a number of factors to consider in arriving at this decision. To complicate matters, you cannot consider each in a vacuum but must develop a total picture to arrive at the best solution. These factors are:

- **Vulnerability.** This is big consideration. At teams, if they are vulnerable, there is potential for a big pickup.
- **Likelihood of having a game (or slam).** If you have 10 HCP and ♦AJ108, your side may not have a game. Take your sure plus by passing and converting.
- **Form of scoring.** Scoring +300 as opposed to +420 is only a 3-IMP loss at teams. At pairs it could be a bottom.
- **Length in their suit.** Usually at least five trumps, sometimes four. I have even done it on a three-card holding with something like

♠ 2 ♥ 8 7 6 5 4 2 ♦ A Q 10 ♣ A K 10

when they were vulnerable at teams and overcalled 1♠ with 2♦.

- **Spots in the suit bid.** The better your spots, the less length you need. A holding of ♦AQ108 is at least on a par with ♦AJ872.
- **Fit for partner.** The less fit for partner, the better.

2010 Rosenblum Cup

WEST	PARTNER	EAST	YOU
	1♠	2♦	?

As South, playing teams with N-S vul., you hold:

♠ Q 8 ♥ 4 2 ♦ A K 10 5 ♣ K 10 9 7 6

Do you or don't you?

In my view this one is easy. Unfortunately I was North and my partner bid 3NT — down one. I would pass and convert the double and take my sure +300 or +500, thank you very much.

# PULLING PARTNER'S PENALTY DOUBLE

Here is a deal from the 2009 Bermuda Bowl:

E-W vul.

♠	—	♠	A 7 6	♠	Q 10 9 8 4 2
♥	Q J 6 5	♥	A 8 4 3	♥	K 9 7 2
♦	A K 7 2	♦	Q 10 8	♦	J 3
♣	A K Q 5 2	♣	J 7 6	♣	3

W

N

E

S

♠	K J 5 3
♥	10
♦	9 6 5 4
♣	10 9 8 4

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1NT	pass	2♠
dbl	pass	pass	2NT
dbl	pass	pass	redbl
pass	3♣	3♥!	pass
6♥	dbl	all pass	

This hand is a natural transition to our next subject — pulling partner's double — because that is basically what East did. The double of 2NT shows extra values and a strong preference to double whatever the opponents bid. The pass of the redouble confirms this. Why East would bid eludes me; at a minimum it shows a complete lack of trust in partner.

Pulling partner's penalty double is to me one of the worst things you can do for a partnership. It destroys trust, which is everything. If I have not bid and pulled, it's because I expect to score much more in the chosen contract. (That is why West raised

3♥ to 6♥.) I will not pull a penalty double out of fear. If I have bid, then if I am going to pull I need to have something greatly different from what partner can reasonably expect.

This applies to pure penalty doubles; however, often the double is cooperative, and it is important to know the difference between the two situations.

Both vul. at IMPs or matchpoints.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♠	pass	1♣	pass
3♠	dbl	1NT	pass
		pass	?

It doesn't matter what you have — pass! This double is pure penalty. Partner can beat 3♠ and anything else they might bid. North's likely hand type:

♠ A K J 10 ♥ 4 2 ♦ Q J 5 3 ♣ A K 10

Both vul. at matchpoints.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	2♠	1♣	dbl
3♣	dbl	pass	pass
		pass	?

Here North has shown around 8-10 points with at least four spades. He thinks doubling 3♣ is right. He probably has good defensive values and exactly four spades. He expects you to look at your hand before you bid.

With

♠ A 6 5 4 ♥ K Q 3 2 ♦ K J 2 ♣ 6 3

you will pass. However I would bid 3♠ with

♠ A 6 5 4 ♥ K 3 2 ♦ Q J 8 7 5 3 ♣ —



# Chapter 8

# DOUBLES 2.0

This chapter discusses doubles at the next level up. It involves the type of thinking, and the range of meanings for a double, that all advanced players must have in their bidding toolboxes to be successful.

# SHOWING EXTRA VALUES

Let's start with the most important type of double — one that shows extra values — and look at how to respond.

It is very important to be able to show extra values in a variety of situations. A lot of players with an exceptionally good hand are content with bidding a new suit, sometimes with a jump. The problem with this approach is twofold:

- It is hard to differentiate between hands with extra high cards and hands with extra playing strength.
- You lose the opportunity to penalize the opponents.

For example, you open 1♥ and the bidding continues:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	1NT	2♣	1♥ ?

Some players would bid 3♦ with

♠ A Q ♥ A K J 3 2 ♦ K Q 5 3 ♣ 6 2

as well as with

♠ 4 ♥ A K J 5 3 2 ♦ A 10 9 6 5 3 ♣ —

If you bid 3♦ with both of these hands, how will partner know which one you have? Far better to double with the first, and reserve the jump to 3♦ to show the second.

You lose the opportunity to penalize the opponents when partner can pass a value-showing double with a big trump stack in the opponent's suit. In this auction I would pass a value-showing double of 2♣ with

♠ K 4 2 ♥ 3 ♦ Q 6 5 4 ♣ Q 10 8 4 2

Of course, you can have extra values as opener, responder, overcaller or advancer, so I will go over each specific position in detail.

## BY RESPONDER

A double by responder at his second round of bidding shows invitational-plus values and no clear bid, for example:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♠	1♣ pass	pass pass/2♠	1♥ dbl

The double shows around 10+ HCP, usually with no clear direction. This is true even if the opponents bid to a higher level before you get to make a second call. You are saying, 'It is our hand'. If partner has opened a major, it denies three-card support. If the double is followed by a bid in a new suit or a cuebid, the auction becomes game forcing.

The corollary to this rule is that a non-jump bid in a new suit is only competitive, while a jump is invitational, therefore passable. Here is a nice example of these principles in action:

2009 Bermuda Bowl (hands rotated):

	♠ Q 9	
	♥ 8 7 3	
	♦ K 7 5	
	♣ A Q 8 3 2	
♠ 8 7 6 5 2		♠ A 10
♥ J 10 9 5 4		♥ Q 6 2
♦ J 4 3		♦ A Q 9 8 2
♣ —		♣ J 9 6
	♠ K J 4 3	
	♥ A K	
	♦ 10 6	
	♣ K 10 7 5 4	

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♣	1♦	1♥ <sup>1</sup>
2♦	pass	pass	dbl
pass	3♣	pass	3♦ <sup>2</sup>
pass	3NT	pass	4♣ <sup>3</sup>
pass	5♣ <sup>4</sup>	all pass	

1. Transfer, showing four-plus spades.
2. Game forcing.
3. Slam try in clubs.
4. Sorry, not interested.

South had a very nice hand. First he showed his four-card spade suit, then he doubled to confirm that he had invitational-plus values. Partner bid 3♣, confirming a club suit, likely five-plus cards. The 3♦ bid created a game force — this is necessary in this auction as 4♣ is only invitational. However, as an aside, if West had bid 1♠ and not 2♦, then South *could* have bid 4♣ directly over 3♣. That is because in this latter auction, North's jump to 3♣ over 1♠ would have been invitational.

On the actual auction, 4♣ over 3NT now shows some slam interest in clubs. Why? If South had only invitational values he would have bid 4♣ directly over 3♣. With a better hand but no slam interest, he would simply have bid 5♣ over 3NT.

## BY OPENER

A double by opener on the second round of bidding shows extra values, at least 16 HCP. (There is one exception that I will discuss shortly.)

♠ Q 6 5   ♥ A K 2   ♦ J 2   ♣ A K J 6 4

LHO	PARTNER	RHO	YOU
			1 ♣
pass	1 ♥	3 ♦	?

You would double 3♦ to show extra values, and deny four hearts. However, with

♠ Q 6   ♥ 4 2   ♦ K J 8 2   ♣ A K J 6 4

you should pass, and if partner reopens with a double to show invitational-plus values, convert to penalties by passing.

2010 CNTC. N-S vul., as South you hold:

♠ A J 8 6 2   ♥ A K Q J 8   ♦ A   ♣ Q 4

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	pass	pass	1 ♠
2NT*	pass	3 ♦	?

You have two messages to send partner: you are very strong, and you are 5-5 in the majors.

First you tell your partner you are strong, by doubling. Now he may be able to confidently double the opponents at any level, with the right hand. Over any bid partner makes, except doubling the opponents, you will bid hearts to show that you are strong *and* distributional. The information partner needs the most, therefore first, is that you have a strong hand with defensive values. The reason for this is that West might bid 4♦ (or even 5♦). Partner can then double with defensive values in the minors, and pass with no strong opinion. In that case you would bid 4♥.

### *Exception to the extra-value double rules*

There is one exception to responder and opener's second-round double showing extra values, and that is when a fit is found. This exception is best learned through an example deal:

2010 Cavendish IMP Pairs, neither vul. (hands rotated).

<div> <div> ♠ — ♥ 10 5 4 ♦ Q 10 7 6 3 ♣ Q 9 7 5 4 </div> <div> ♠ K 10 2 ♥ 9 8 3 ♦ K 9 4 ♣ K 10 8 6 </div> <div> ♠ A J 8 7 6 5 ♥ Q J ♦ J 8 2 ♣ A 3 </div> </div>			
<div> <div>♠ Q 9 4 3</div> <div>♥ A K 7 6 2</div> <div>♦ A 5</div> <div>♣ J 2</div> </div>			
<div> <div>W</div> <div>N</div> <div>E</div> <div>S</div> </div>			
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	2♥ <sup>1</sup>	2♠	1♥ ?

#### 1. Constructive.

When the partnership has found a fit, a double is no longer needed to show extra values with a hand lacking clear direction, so it reverts to a pure penalty double.

Here, South should double. Partner in this case has an easy pass. Many Souths in this situation bid 3♥, which made with an overtrick for +170. However, 2♠ doubled is down three for +500. A lot of IMPs lost! Before we leave this topic, here is an example of responder making a penalty double after a fit has been found.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	1♥	pass	1♦
3♣	?		2♥

North would double for penalties with something like

♠ A 3 2 ♥ J 8 6 5 ♦ 5 ♣ Q J 9 8 4

### BY OVERCALLER/DOUBLER

After the opponents open the bidding, you have a choice of how to enter the auction with a worthwhile hand — overcall or double? An overcall is usually limited to about 17 HCP, although most experts will overcall with more.

When should you overcall and when should you double, given that you have a good hand? Ideally what you would like to do when you have extra values is bid first then double. Why?

Tip 43: If it's close, it is almost always better to bid your suit(s) and then later double to show extra values. In that way partner can choose either to bid a new suit, raise yours or convert the double to penalties by passing. He can't do any of that if you double first, and then bid a suit.

Both vul., IMPs, you hold as South:

♠ A K ♥ 3 ♦ A K Q 10 7 6 ♣ Q 8 6 2

and RHO opens 1♣. What do you bid?

Here you could justify either 1♦ or double, but 1♦ is better. In a local team game South doubled and faced this dilemma when the bidding got back to him:



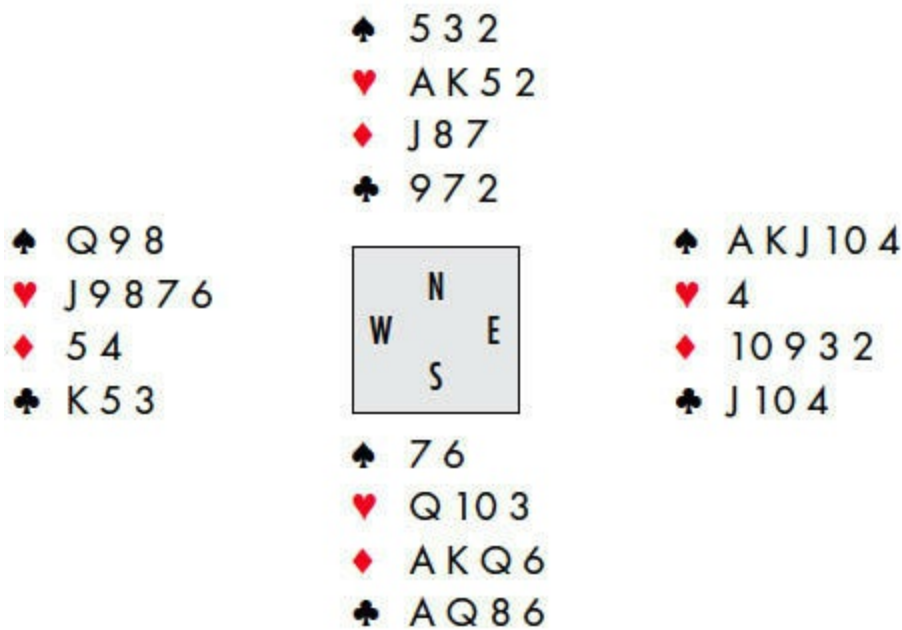


expert game you hold as South, E-W vul.:

♠ 7 6   ♥ Q 10 3   ♦ A K Q 6   ♣ A Q 8 6

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	pass	1♠	dbl
2♠	dbl*	3♠	?

Here a double by you says, ‘I have extra values for my double’. It usually denies a good spade stopper, otherwise you might have tried 3NT. Unless he is very unbalanced, North will convert for penalties, as my partner did here:



Here 3♠ went down three for -500 (as South I led a spade, and went up with the ♣A to lead a second spade) against a partscore.

BY ADVANCER

At higher levels the meaning of a double by advancer changes from strictly support for the unbid suits to convertible values that are good for offense or defense. This is

consistent with its high-level use in other positions (opener, overcaller, etc...). Here is an example:

N-S vulnerable, playing IMPs, you hold as South:

♠ 10 8 ♥ A K Q J 10 2 ♦ A 9 4 ♣ A 7

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	pass	3♠	4♥
4♠	dbl	pass	?

Your 4♥ bid shows a good, maybe very good, hand. This is logical with two passed hands and a preemptor. With a mediocre hand (11-13) you can pass and hope that North can reopen with some values.

Most expert players have the following agreements on this type of auction:

When the bidding is at the five- or six-level and partner has shown a good hand, the advancer (here it's North) can:

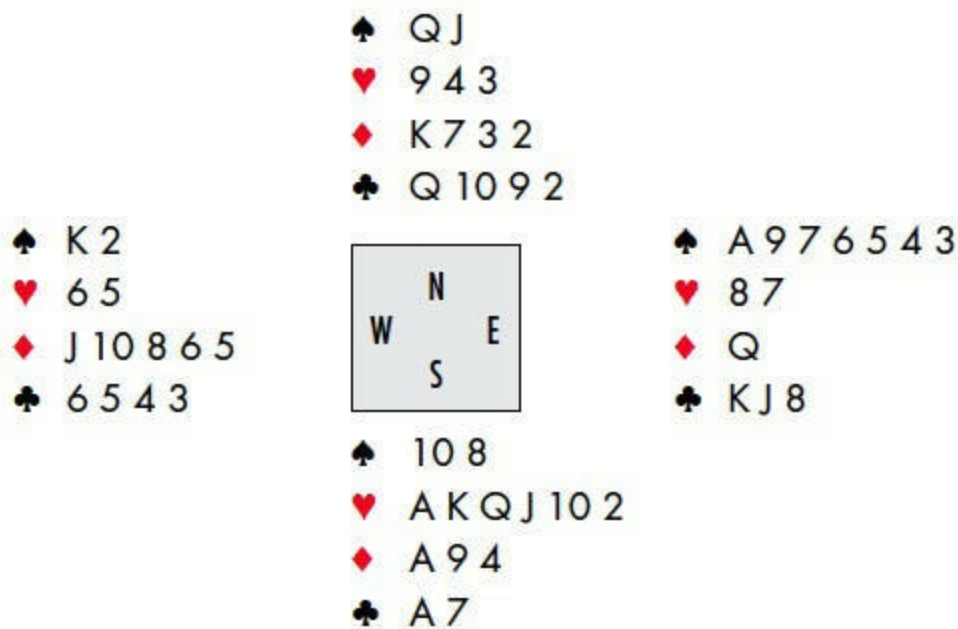
**pass:** 'I have nothing constructive to say. You are on your own.'

**bid 5♥:** 'I don't want to defend, and I have some values in a hand that is good for offense in a heart contract. *I do not have two spades.*'

**bid 5♣ or 5♦ :** 'I have a good hand, more than you can expect, and have a control, usually the ace, in the suit bid.' *This is a slam try in hearts.* Usually this hand will have a singleton spade, or three or four small (thus knows partner has a singleton or void).

**double:** 'I have some values, but I don't have any of the above hands.' This will usually end the auction, unless partner is very strong and offense-oriented.

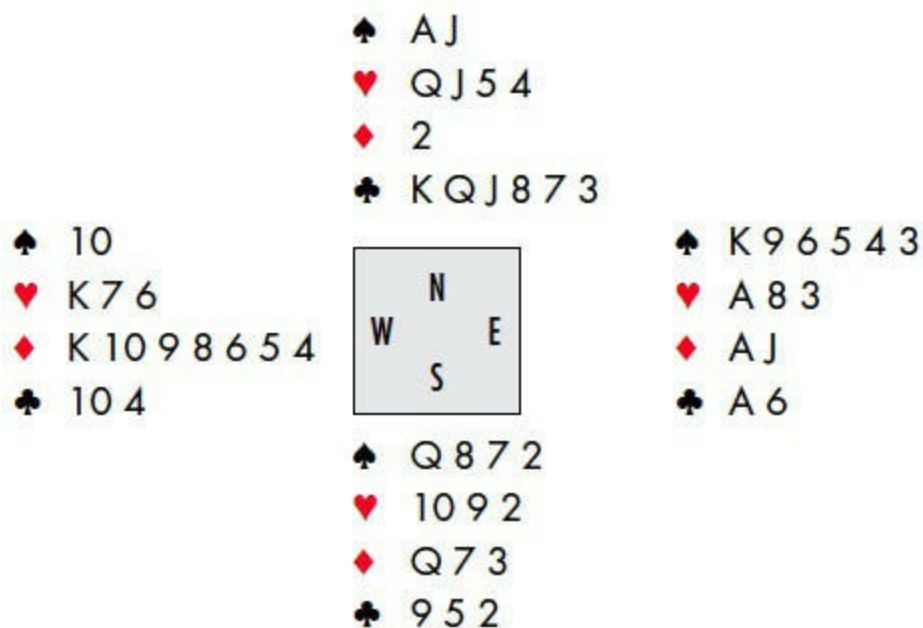
Although it is close, I think the right choice here is to pass the double. You have good defense and partner has values, of which some could easily be in spades. The full deal:



At the table North bid 5♥, down one; 4♠ goes down two for +300.

### SHOWING EXTRA VALUES — WARNING!

There are a couple of pitfalls if you are not careful. First, once you have shown extra values, don't bid them again unless you have substantially more than you've already promised. Here is a deal from the 2009 Venice Cup where North did not heed this advice:



With E-W vul. the bidding went:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	1♣	1♠	pass
2♦	dbl	redbl	3♣
3♠	4♣	4♠	pass
5♦	all pass		

Although I do not think it had a bearing on the result (5♦ making), 4♣ was a clear overbid. North had opened the bidding and shown approximately 16+ with her double of 2♦. Partner's 3♣ said, 'I don't want to defend 2♦ redoubled, and of your two suits I prefer clubs.' North had a dead minimum and should have passed over 3♠.

Secondly, remember that after you have shown your values accurately, future decisions on what to do in the bidding always rest with partner. Here is a deal in which South got lulled by the auction, mostly by an opponent's pass.

1989 European Championship. E-W vul., you hold as South (hands rotated):

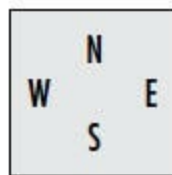
♠ K ♥ K Q 10 2 ♦ J 9 5 2 ♣ K Q J 3

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♠	pass	3♠	dbl
pass	4♥	pass	pass
4♠	pass	pass	?

I don't have a big problem with the double of 3♠. It's not pretty but you must get in there. Partner dutifully bids his best suit and now West backs in with 4♠. *Partner passed over that.* This means he is not interested in bidding more, nor is he interested in doubling them. Remember, you forced him to bid at the four-level: he could have a zero-count. At the table South doubled 4♠ — declarer misguessed trumps so there were only two overtricks for -990. The full deal:

♠ J 9 8 7 5  
♥ —  
♦ A K Q 4  
♣ A 7 4 2

♠ 10 4  
♥ A J 9 8 3  
♦ 10 8 7 3  
♣ 9 5



♠ K  
♥ K Q 10 2  
♦ J 9 5 2  
♣ K Q J 3

♠ A Q 6 3 2  
♥ 7 6 5 4  
♦ 6  
♣ 10 8 6

# BIDDING WHEN PARTNER HAS SHOWN EXTRA VALUES

This is hard for most players. The reason is that more often than not the weak hand does not appreciate the value of minimal assets, and doesn't raise partner accordingly.

The key is visualization. What does partner have to bid this way? Another question: 'Would partner bid this way holding...?' If you start imagining some example hands for partner you should come quite close to his actual holding. The other problem that can cause underbidding is a lack of discipline in the partnership. Maybe partner bid this way in the past, and actually turned out to have an ace less than what he had promised.

2009 Bermuda Bowl (hands rotated). N-S vul., holding

♠ Q 8 5 2 ♥ 8 7 6 2 ♦ K 10 4 ♣ 8 6

South heard this auction:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	1♦	1♥	pass
2♥	dbl	3♥	pass
pass	4♣	pass	?

If I held this hand I would be thinking:

*Why didn't I make a negative double of 1♥? Partner has shown a strong, distributional hand — strong from his double and distributional as he is forcing our partnership to the four-level opposite anything in my hand. I'm looking at four hearts, and the opponents have not bid past the three-level, so he likely has zero or one heart, thus a fragment in spades. My ♠Q is probably a working card. My ♦K is obviously huge — if I had only this card I would bid 5♦. I also have three diamonds and a ruffing value in clubs. I will bid 4♥, trying to catch up in case partner wants to bid slam. I expect my expert partner to bid clubs at the*

*level he wants to play, so that I can either pass or convert to diamonds, as I will here.*

I think this is the right decision, to try for slam, but there is no question that I would be heading for at least game. South, for reasons known only to himself, bid only 4♦. Partner's hand:

♠ K 10 4 ♥ — ♦ A Q J 7 2 ♣ K Q J 4 3

Tip 44: To help guide my game and slam decisions I like to use loser counts in the strong hand and cover cards in the weaker hand.

Using this tool I have found that most hands in the strong jump-shift range have about a four to five loser count. In the above example the four losers are: two in spades, one in diamonds and one in clubs. South has one certain cover card in diamonds, one almost certain in spades, and one possible in the doubleton club.

Four losers minus three cover cards = a small slam, so South should be looking in that direction.

However, this Tip is best treated as a useful tool or indicator, not an ironclad certainty.



# CONVERTING TAKEOUT DOUBLES TO PENALTIES

## THE THEORY

When partner has extra values *and* a fit for your suit, he will either raise or cuebid. So a value-showing double, besides showing extra high cards, denies a primary fit. This is a very important factor when considering converting a value double to penalties.

Another important consideration is the opponents' expected degree of fit. The Law of Total Tricks suggests that you can use traditional point-count totals when deciding to double when they have an eight-card fit. So the key questions to ask yourself are:

- Based on what you know from the bidding and your hand, do the opponents have the 'normal' eight-card fit? Seven? Nine or more?
- Are the key cards in their suits onside, or behind the length and strength?
- How are suits splitting?
- Can your side get ruffs?

## THE PRACTICE

As always you need to visualize how the play will go in your most likely game/slam contract.

Both vul., as South playing teams, you hold

♠ K J   ♥ A 5 4 3   ♦ 10 8 7   ♣ J 8 5 2			
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1 ♣	pass	1 ♥
2 ♦	dbl	pass	?

Okay, so let's start the analysis as you always should — with HCP:

- Partner has 16+, West 13+, you have 10... hey, that's 40. East has zero.
- Does your side have enough points for a game? Probably.
- What game? Maybe 3NT if partner has a diamond stopper.
- How will it play? Well, a diamond lead will knock out partner's presumed

stopper. If he can't run nine tricks, he will go down. One advantage is that he knows where all the high cards are located. This may not help if they have a key ace or king as an entry.

I estimate the chances as at best 50-50. What about 2♦?

Well, West will likely have a six-card suit to two top honors and an outside card. That means on most hands he will go down two for +500 if you pass the double. Here is the actual deal from a tournament where West was punished for a poor overcall:

	♠ A 6 4 3	
	♥ K J 2	
	♦ Q 6 4	
	♣ A K 3	
♠ Q 5		♠ 10 9 8 7 2
♥ Q 10 9		♥ 8 7 6
♦ A K J 9 3		♦ 5 2
♣ Q 7 6		♣ 10 9 4
	<div> <div>N</div> <div>W      E</div> <div>S</div> </div>	
	♠ K J	
	♥ A 5 4 3	
	♦ 10 8 7	
	♣ J 8 5 2	

For North-South, 3NT is a lucky make, while 2♦ doubled is down three for -800. E-W vul., as South playing matchpoints, you hold

♠ K J 7 6   ♥ A 9   ♦ A 3   ♣ 10 8 7 5 4			
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	1♦	1♥	1♣
2♥	dbl	pass	?

South starts to analyze as follow:

*Partner has at least invitational values. He does not have a spade fit, and*

*probably has fewer than four clubs. He has diamonds, but they are not extraordinarily strong or long, or he might have tried for game our way. Normally I would say that the opponents are likely on an eight-card fit as there has been no preemptive jump by West on his minimal values, nor a 3♥ bid by East over the double. However, this vulnerability suggests sound values or extra length. Then again, it is matchpoints. But where I am going? Nowhere. I have defense. This is really a very easy decision — pass.*

The full deal from the 2010 N.A. Pairs Final (hands rotated):

♠ 10 9 5 3 2	♠ A 8	♠ Q 4
♥ Q 5 4	♥ 8 7 2	♥ K J 10 6 3
♦ K 9 5	♦ Q J 10 8 6	♦ 7 4 2
♣ Q 9	♣ A K 2	♣ J 6 3
	<div> <div>W</div> <div>N</div> <div>E</div> <div>S</div> </div>	
	♠ K J 7 6	
	♥ A 9	
	♦ A 3	
	♣ 10 8 7 5 4	

Down two meant +500 and a top for the eventual winners, David Yang and Xiaodong Shi. Notice that the decision to pass is right at all forms of scoring, at any vulnerability. Summarizing, the key factors are: no fit and no certainty of game.

# CONVENTIONAL DOUBLES

A lot of players assign special meanings to specific doubles. These include:

- Support doubles (and redoubles)
- Rosencranz doubles (or redoubles) to show a high honor in partner's suit
- The double of a splinter to ask for the suit above the splinter to be led
- When expecting to be on lead, a double of a high-level suit bid to suggest a sacrifice
- Maximal overcall doubles

They all have their value, some more than others. However, do these doubles take away your ability to penalize the opponents? I think they definitely do, and I think the price is too high. Let's revisit an earlier example to illustrate this point:

2010 Cavendish IMP Pairs, neither vul (hands rotated). You are South:

♠ Q 9 4 3   ♥ A K 7 6 2   ♦ A 5   ♣ J 2			
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	2♥ <sup>1</sup>	2♠	1♥ ?

## 1. Constructive.

To me this is a clear penalty double. Even at IMP scoring. Even if partner did not promise a constructive raise. You have four-plus tricks in your hand and partner has 8 to 10 points. Easy — if you don't play the double to have a different meaning. You shouldn't here, because you have room to bid a new suit to make a game try. South in this auction bid a wimpy 3♥, and made four (not surprisingly). The full deal:

♠ —	♠ K 10 2	♠ A J 8 7 6 5
♥ 10 5 4	♥ 9 8 3	♥ Q J
♦ Q 10 7 6 3	♦ K 9 4	♦ J 8 2
♣ Q 9 7 5 4	♣ K 10 8 6	♣ A 3

W

N

E

S

♠ Q 9 4 3	♠ —
♥ A K 7 6 2	♥ 10 5 4
♦ A 5	♦ Q 10 7 6 3
♣ J 2	♣ Q 9 7 5 4

♠ —  
♥ 10 5 4  
♦ Q 10 7 6 3  
♣ Q 9 7 5 4

♠ A J 8 7 6 5  
♥ Q J  
♦ J 8 2  
♣ A 3

♠ Q 9 4 3  
♥ A K 7 6 2  
♦ A 5  
♣ J 2

Only two of the 23 pairs penalized East-West. Obviously, for many a double by South would have had a different meaning. If this is true of your situation, here is a useful Tip.

**Tip 45:** If partner could not have made a penalty double, try to protect him by competing yourself with a double instead of with a suit bid.

So here, if the double would not be for penalties, South should pass. Now, in case South wanted to penalize but couldn't, North should double at his turn. This double should mean:

*I want to compete to 3♥, but if you have a hand on which you wanted to penalize 2♠, I'm game.*

# STOPPING PARTNER FROM BIDDING MORE

In a competitive auction there will often be ambiguity as to who can make what. Quite often the Forcing Pass Principle will apply. But other times not. In those situations it may be critical to double, in order to deter partner from bidding higher when you know or are pretty sure that it is wrong. Here is a good example to illustrate this idea:

2010 World Mixed Pairs Final. E-W vul., as South you hold

♠AK85
♥1082
♦76
♣8754

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	1♥	1♠	2♥
4♥	pass	4♠	?

You are very happy that the opponents have bid up to 4♠, and you like your chances of defeating the contract with partner being a second-seat opener. But there is danger lurking. At the table, South complacently passed, and North went on to 5♥ as a two-way shot. The full deal:

	♠ —	
	♥ KJ97653	
	♦ KJ5	
	♣ KJ6	
♠ J763		♠ Q10942
♥ 4		♥ AQ
♦ A10982		♦ Q43
♣ A102		♣ Q93
	<div> <div>W</div> <div>N</div> <div>E</div> <div>S</div> </div>	
	♠ AK85	
	♥ 1082	
	♦ 76	
	♣ 8754	

Notice that North did not bid 5♥ directly over the 4♥ cuebid, but waited until partner had a chance to express her opinion. South expected to beat 4♠, it was matchpoints, so she should have doubled! Partner bidding on is not unforeseeable.

One of my favorite columns in the *ACBL Bulletin* is the Granovetters’ “Partnership Bridge”. My hat’s off to them for discussing important bidding judgment issues, while putting their own poor results in the spotlight. Here is a very good example from their column on the subject of stopping partner from bidding more when you know it’s wrong.

N-S vul., playing matchpoints

<div> <div> ♠ —  ♥ KJ87  ♦ 1065  ♣ AJ10872 </div> <div> ♠ 765  ♥ A64  ♦ K732  ♣ Q93 </div> <div> <div> <div>N</div> <div>W<div>E</div>S</div> </div> <div> ♠ AK10  ♥ 109532  ♦ QJ8  ♣ K4 </div> </div> <div> ♠ QJ98432  ♥ Q  ♦ A94  ♣ 65 </div> </div>			
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	Matthew		Pamela
pass	3♣ <sup>1</sup>	3♠	1♥
4♠	5♥	all pass	pass

1. Fit showing.

In this auction, Matthew felt compelled to bid one more. Pamela disagreed. In my opinion Pamela was completely at fault for this poor result: doubling 3♠ to me is clear. This is for penalties. Partner has clubs and hearts, usually at least 5-4. Ten out of of Pamela’s 13 HCP are outside of these suits. Plus, RHO just bid a suit in which she

likely has three trump tricks. Double! Matthew will probably still bid 4♥ with his spade void, but will know to defend 4♠. Her pass over 3♠ said, ‘I don’t have anything more to say, or I don’t have a strong opinion about what to do.’ But she did!



# HIGH-LEVEL DECISIONS

These are hard, no doubt about it. Partner opens the bidding in a minor and the next player bids game in a major. Not so bad if you have a fit, but what if you don't? You need first to have some firm agreements with partner, and then to use sound judgment when choosing your action. The only consolation is that the opponent(s) with your cards is (you hope) faced with the same dilemma.

A double of a high-level bid by the opponents is value showing. In contrast to negative doubles at the one- or two-level, there is less certainty that the doubler will have four cards in the unbid major. The only thing you can infer is that doubler does not have a huge fit for your suit. So on this auction with neither vul.:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
4♠	dbl	pass	1♣ ?

the expert consensus is that when unsure take the sure plus. This to me makes sense. You are guessing at the five-level. Even if you can make what you bid, partner might bid six! Also, the preempt means that there will be bad splits.

If you do pull the double, you are not pulling out of fear but out of an expectation of making something at the five-level — you will have lots of playing strength and at least a good opening bid. Here, 4NT by South is a takeout, usually with a void in the jumper's suit. A 5NT bid is best played as pick-a-slam, as opposed to Grand Slam Force.

How many points does North need for the double? Good question. First I will say that my answer is based on my experience, and other experts may have slightly different thresholds. Also, the answer is not black and white. It depends what type of values you have, where they are located and what your distribution is like. Let's look at some examples in a specific auction.

You play a strong notrump system, with five-card majors. Both vul., playing teams:

LHO	PARTNER	RHO	YOU
	1♣	4♠	?
♠ A 6 4 3   ♥ 8 5 2   ♦ 9 6 4   ♣ A 8 3			

Double. Two sure tricks, support for all suits, cards also good for offense.

♠ 4 3   ♥ K Q 5 2   ♦ 9 6 5 4   ♣ A 8 3

Double. Not as many sure tricks, but you still have good values.

♠ 3   ♥ K Q 5 2   ♦ 9 6 5 4   ♣ 10 9 8 3

Pass. Nice shape, but just a bit too weak for a double and not enough distribution for a 5♣ bid.

♠ —   ♥ K Q 5 2   ♦ 9 6 5 4   ♣ 10 9 8 3 2

Pass. If partner doubles I will bid 4NT.

♠ —   ♥ K Q 5 2   ♦ 9 6 5 4 2   ♣ K 8 3 2

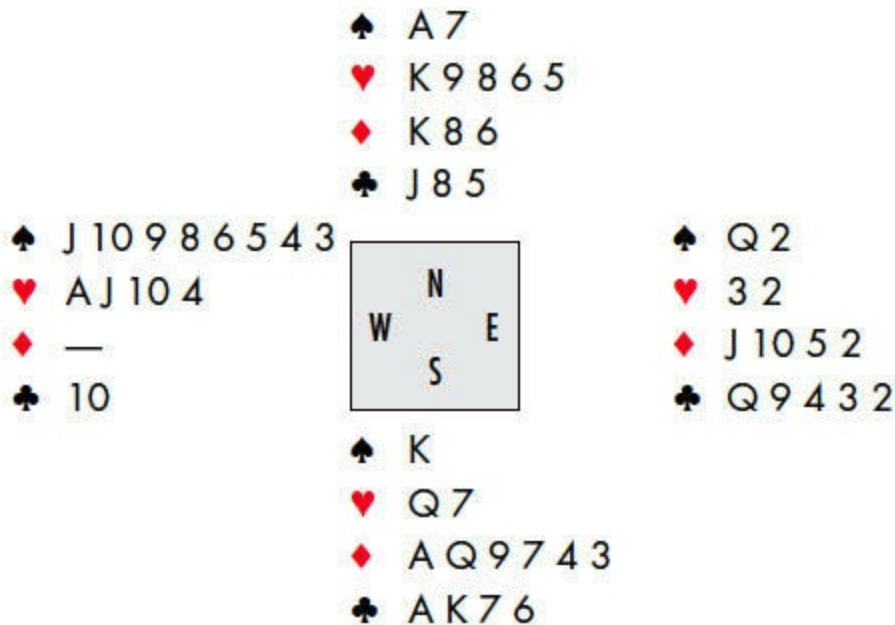
4NT. My void convinces me to bid. No guarantees and they may be going down in 4♠.

♠ 10 8   ♥ Q J 10 7   ♦ A Q 8 7 3   ♣ J 4

Double. Absolutely.

Okay enough theory; let's look at some real-life examples:

2009 Spingold. N-S vul.



## Open Room

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1♣*
4♠	dbl	pass	5♦
pass	6♦	pass	pass
dbl	all pass		

## Closed Room

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1♣*
4♠	dbl	all pass	

As you can see the auctions started off identically (both 1♣ bids being strong and artificial), until South's second call. In the Closed Room, South chose reasonably to pass. He had decent playing strength, but his suit strength was only average. The major-suit cards were probably an asset on defense only. One down was +100. In the Open

Room, South chose to bid his suit. Partner bid 6♦ with slightly above-average high cards that should all be working. Just looking at the North-South cards it looks like a good slam. But, as might be expected, the distribution was foul, and declarer finished down one for -200 and a 7-IMP loss.

Of interest is the double of 6♦. West had good defense in hearts, and knew that diamonds were breaking poorly, as were clubs. He also knew the opponents had no room to scientifically determine whether slam was a good bet. His speculative double (a type to be discussed in Chapter 9) netted +300.

Another dilemma is whether to double or bid 4NT with a decent three-suited hand including a void in preemptor’s suit when the opponents open with four of a major. As highlighted elsewhere in this book, experience and analysis of actual hand results has clearly demonstrated to me that 4NT is better. Here is an example. 2008 USBC. You hold as South with N-S vul:

♠ Q 10 7 5    ♥ 10 8    ♦ A 5    ♣ K Q J 9 8

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	dbl	4♥ pass	pass ?

You have a very good hand on this auction. Enough to commit to the five-level, maybe. I don’t think it is right to bid 4♠ with such a poor suit. You could bid 5♣, but what if partner only has two small clubs? You could pass and take your likely sure plus. Tough! At the table South bid 4♠ — a reasonable selection from unpalatable choices.

What would you do if partner had bid 4NT instead of doubling? Notice how your mindset changes. Now you have a *great* hand. Partner has around 13 HCP *in three suits*. That means you are only missing around 5 HCP. You have a nine-card fit in clubs and the hand should play close to double dummy. There may be bad splits but your nine-card fit (which is in a good quality suit) can overcome such breaks. Over partner’s 4NT I would bid 6♣. Here is the full deal:

	♠ A J 9 6	
	♥ —	
	♦ K 10 8 7 4	
	♣ A 10 7 4	
♠ K 4 2	<div> <div>W</div> <div>N</div> <div>E</div> <div>S</div> </div>	♠ 8 3
♥ 5 4 2		♥ A K Q J 9 7 6 3
♦ Q J 6 2		♦ 9 3
♣ 6 3 2		♣ 5
	♠ Q 10 7 5	
	♥ 10 8	
	♦ A 5	
	♣ K Q J 9 8	

As you can see, 7♣ or 7♠ was cold with the odds-on spade finesse working.

# Chapter 9

# DOUBLES 3.0

In Chapters 6-8 I have tried to reinforce the principles of basic doubles and the thinking that lies behind sound doubling decisions. In Chapter 9 we will look at some rarer applications for those red double cards.

# TWO BIDS AND A DOUBLE BY THE SAME HAND

There are many occasions when you want to compete with a good long suit and a good hand. Sometimes you will have two suits. You bid your suit(s), and then bid your suit(s) again. The opponents, however, keep bidding. You have enough to bid a third time but you want to involve partner in your decision-making. In this type of auction I believe the meaning of a late double should be:

*Partner, I want to compete in my suit(s) but I also have defense. My suit will play fine opposite a singleton. I am doubling instead of just bidding my suit again in case you have a strong preference for penalizing them.*

2010 World Mixed Pairs, both vul.

	♠ A Q J 8 6 3 2	
	♥ —	
	♦ 7	
	♣ K 10 8 6 4	
♠ 7 5		♠ K 4
♥ K J 8 6 4		♥ Q 9 3
♦ A Q 6		♦ K 10 9 8 5 4
♣ A J 9		♣ Q 2
	♠ 10 9	
	♥ A 10 7 5 2	
	♦ J 3 2	
	♣ 7 5 3	

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	1♠	3♦ <sup>1</sup>	pass
4♥	4♠	pass	pass
5♥	5♠!	pass	pass
dbl	all pass		



## 1. Fit showing.

Right or wrong, North wanted to bid 5♠. Here ‘two bids and a double’ would convey the message, and partner will happily convert to penalties, going plus instead of minus.

Here is another deal that demonstrates this principle.

2010 Winnipeg Regional. As South, both vul., you hold

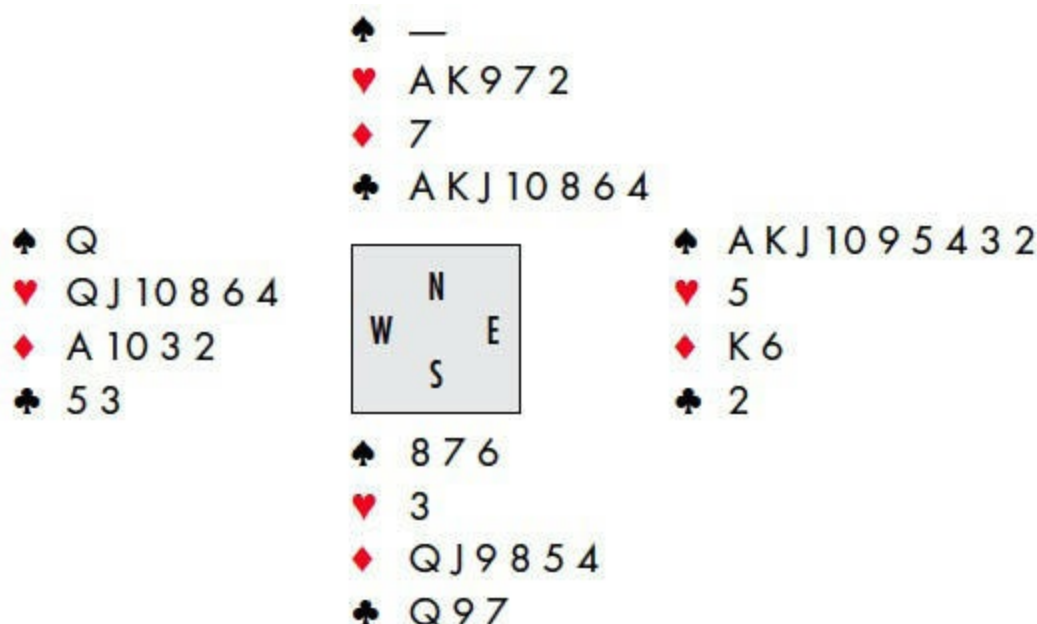
♠ J 9 8   ♥ 3   ♦ Q J 9 8 5 4   ♣ Q 9 8

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♣	4♠	pass
pass	5♣	5♠	pass
pass	dbl	pass	?

Partner did not double the second time. His double at his third turn means, ‘I want to bid on, but if you want to convert to penalties by passing, I do have some defensive values.’ Or in other words, ‘Look at your hand!’

So being a good partner, you look at your hand (he is lucky to have you as his partner!). There are two long suits out there, probably at least eight cards in length. Despite this you have three cards in both. Partner probably is void in spades and your side has an *eleven*-card fit and a ruffing value. You have zero defense against 5♠. Boy, this game is easy — just bid 6♣.

Unfortunately, a person I really like was taking a catnap in the South seat at the time and passed. The full deal:



On this layout, 6♣ and 5♠ both made.

One final example, this time from a matchpoint cat-and-mouse game with familiar opponents at the September 2011 Winnipeg Sectional:

E-W vul., as South (hands rotated) you hold

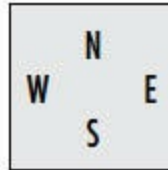
♠ K Q J   ♥ A K 9 7 5 3 2   ♦ Q 10   ♣ 6

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		1♣	1♥
pass	pass	dbl	pass
1♠	pass	pass	2♥
pass	pass	2♠	3♥
3♠	pass	pass	?

The bidding seems a little strange (wait until you see the hands!), but they are finally in the situation you want them! Double! Partner knows you want to play in hearts, but will be happy (in this case ecstatic) to defend spades. Partner finally wakes up (yes, alas, the same catnapper from the previous deal) and bids 4♥. The full deal:

♠ 10 9  
♥ 10 8 4  
♦ 8 5 4 2  
♣ A 10 8 5

♠ 8 6 5 4 2  
♥ Q J  
♦ A J 3  
♣ J 7 2



♠ A 7 3  
♥ 6  
♦ K 9 7 6  
♣ K Q 9 4 3

♠ K Q J  
♥ A K 9 7 5 3 2  
♦ Q 10  
♣ 6

# DOUBLING A 1NT OPENING OR OVERCALL

It is not my intent to discuss conventions for competing over 1NT, which ones are the best, etc... What I will address are two important subjects:

- When to double and when to overcall
- The art of passing

## WHEN TO DOUBLE AND WHEN TO OVERCALL

The key here is in your values. If, in direct seat, you have a distributional hand it is usually correct to come into the auction. But there must be a limit to your high-card strength for an overcall. How can partner tell whether you have 10 or 17 HCP? A good guide is to double with the top of the opponent's range or better. Against a strong notrump this would be around 17+ HCP.

When you have less — for example an average 13 HCP, and RHO opens a 12-14 1NT — it is too risky to double. This is why it is important for the hand in the passout seat to protect partner. Here is an example of what can easily happen when you do not have this agreement (hands rotated).

2009 Venice Cup E-W vul.

	♠ A J 9 5 2	
	♥ 5 2	
	♦ 9 8 7 6 2	
	♣ 6	
♠ Q 10 8 6		♠ K 7 3
♥ 10 9 7 4		♥ Q 6
♦ 10 3		♦ K J 5 4
♣ 10 3 2		♣ K Q J 8
	♠ 4	
	♥ A K J 8 3	
	♦ A Q	
	♣ A 9 7 5 4	

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
all pass	pass	1NT	2♥

Instead of collecting a sizeable penalty (East-West have no good spot if South starts with a double), North-South played in 2♥ for +170. At the other table the bidding went:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
all pass	2♠	2NT	dbl

This went down four, for -1100 and 14 IMPs.

One other point I would like to make. Some pairs, including my teammates, play that a double of 1NT shows a two- or three-suited takeout with at least 11 HCP. Again, with no upper limit, how does North know to leave in the double with a 5-count? Opposite 18 HCP it is right. If, however, the doubler has 11 HCP the opponents are likely going to be making overtricks in 1NT doubled!

Try this one from a 2010 Winnipeg Sectional. With E-W vul., I held as South:

♠ A K 10 9 7 6 4   ♥ Q 9 4   ♦ K J   ♣ 9

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		1NT <sup>1</sup>	?

1. 12-15.

My choices were:

1. 2♠.
2. Double for penalties and hope the spades run.
3. Pass and defend 1NT, and hope we do not have a game. If the opponents transfer into hearts, bid 2♠ over that.

1) 2♠ is a middle of the road action that a lot of players would take. I would not. It will get you to a spade partscore, period. The opponents will know what to do. It will usually miss a game when it is there, because partner cannot assume you have so many playing tricks. If spades come in you have eight tricks in your own hand. So if partner holds:

♠ 5 3   ♥ A 5 3 2   ♦ A 10 6 5   ♣ 7 6 5

he will pass, and you will probably make ten or eleven tricks.

2) Double is better. You still have a chance at a big number, and if the opponents run, partner will play you for a good hand and will raise with the example hand in the above paragraph. The downside to a double is that they may make 1NT, and that is -180 vs. -90. The other plus to a double is that the opponents might be able to make a game but will probably not bid it, thinking you have 15+ HCP.

3) The third choice is also reasonable, especially at this vulnerability. If you have a game, you are going to take ten tricks against 1NT, and that is +400, about the same as bidding and making game. If you are +300 and game doesn't make, then you will either have a top at pairs, or win 8 or 9 IMPs at teams.

At the table I doubled. The bidding continued:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		1NT	dbl
2♣	pass	pass	2♠
3♣	3♠	pass	pass
pass			

The full deal:

	♠ Q J 3	
	♥ 8 7 5 3	
	♦ 8 7 5 4	
	♣ 8 2	
♠ 5		♠ 8 2
♥ K 10 2		♥ A J 6
♦ 10 9 6 2		♦ A Q 3
♣ A Q J 4 3		♣ K 10 7 6 5
	<div> <div>N</div> <div>W      E</div> <div>S</div> </div>	
	♠ A K 10 9 7 6 4	
	♥ Q 9 4	
	♦ K J	
	♣ 9	

Our 3♠ went down one, while the opponents can make 5♣. However, had I passed the opponents might have wound up in 3NT!

Tip 46: In passout seat after a 1NT opener, the maximum point count for a suit bid still applies. The only difference is that the values for a double can be less. My suggestion is when it is a weak 1NT, a good 10 HCP is acceptable. Against a strong 1NT I would like to have 12+ HCP.

## THE ART OF PASSING

This is an important topic seldom discussed. There are two separate situations I would like to discuss:

- When you have a good/solid suit
- When the opponents bid 1NT over your partner's opening bid.

### *Solid Suits*

What do you do if they open 1NT and you have a solid suit? Does their range matter? Vulnerability? What if your suit is not quite solid?

With a solid suit it is often right to pass when the opponents bid 1NT, where you know you have very good defense. This is also true when you have a good suit and an entry.

The vulnerability is very important in judging these situations — I would not pass if I were vulnerable against not. The type of scoring is equally as important. Whether you are +400 or +420 is no big deal at IMPs, but everything at matchpoints.

The last factor is the range of the notrump opening. Over a 15-17 notrump I would likely just pass, thinking the prospects of making game are poor with so many high cards on my right. Another way to look at this is you have as South (say) 13 HCP and East has 16 HCP on average. That leaves 11 HCP for partner and West to split. So partner's likely high-card holding is 5-6. Obviously you want to get the best score possible, but sometimes you can't get too greedy. If you double a 1NT opening with a solid seven-card suit and they run to a makeable spot you have traded a plus for a minus. They might even bid a makeable game! Yikes!

2010 Rosenblum Cup. As South, N-S vul., you hold

♠ Q 9   ♥ A K Q 5 4 3   ♦ J 9 2   ♣ 6 5			
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	pass	1NT <sup>1</sup>	?

1. 15-17 HCP.

The vulnerability, as usual, plays the key role in your decision. You are vulnerable at teams so that means you want to try for game, but be wary of being doubled. With the hand you have, both outcomes are possible.

The right choice here is to pass. First, game is unlikely. You have soft points outside of hearts. Is partner going to cover four of your seven outside losers, especially sitting in front of the strong hand? The second danger is that West could have 8-9 HCP and four or five hearts. Now you are going for 800 or 1100 against 620. Even if West has



♠ J 4 3 ♥ J 8 2 ♦ A Q 6 5 ♣ K 9 8

he will double and now you are -500. Meanwhile, game for East-West is still possible if they have a spade fit, but definitely not a sure thing.

The final concern is that your 2♥ bid might lead East-West to bid a minor-suit game instead of 3NT — something that they would not consider without your warning about checking for heart stoppers. The full deal (hands rotated):

	♠ 8 7 6 5	
	♥ 10 2	
	♦ A Q 8 3	
	♣ 10 7 3	
♠ J 4 3 2		♠ A K 10
♥ J 8		♥ 9 7 6
♦ 6 5		♦ K 10 7 4
♣ K 9 8 4 2		♣ A Q J
	<div> <div>N</div> <div>W S E</div> </div>	
	♠ Q 9	
	♥ A K Q 5 4 3	
	♦ J 9 2	
	♣ 6 5	

Here you beat 1NT one for +50 if you pass, instead of making 2♥ for + 110. So by bidding you take a big risk for 2 IMPs! Not me! South, in my opinion, deserved what he got when he bid 2♦, a transfer to hearts. West passed but eventually balanced with 2♠. Now +50 turned into -110!

### *They overcall 1NT — offense or defense*

The other situation where passing is often overlooked as an option by players at all levels is when you have a lot of playing strength. The mind set is, 'I must bid when I have a six-card suit or I am 5-5. With luck we can make it or even find a big fit and bid a game.' In a way I do not disagree with this thinking, but experience is starting to suggest that pass is a very good alternative.

The key point is that if your side does have a fit, you can easily beat 1NT. If they are vulnerable that could be +300 or more. As opposed to a minus score or even +140, this option is very appealing. Yes, you will pay off occasionally when the opponents with your cards go +420 or +620. Obviously the vulnerability will sometimes come into

play. If your side doesn't have a fit you still might easily go plus on defense, when you will get a minus, possibly doubled, on offense. Let's look at some examples that reinforce this principle. Here is a deal that received several write-ups in a couple of matches during the 2009 World Championships.

E-W vul. As South (hands rotated) you hold

♠ A ♥ J 10 8 7 6 ♦ 2 ♣ J 7 6 5 4 2

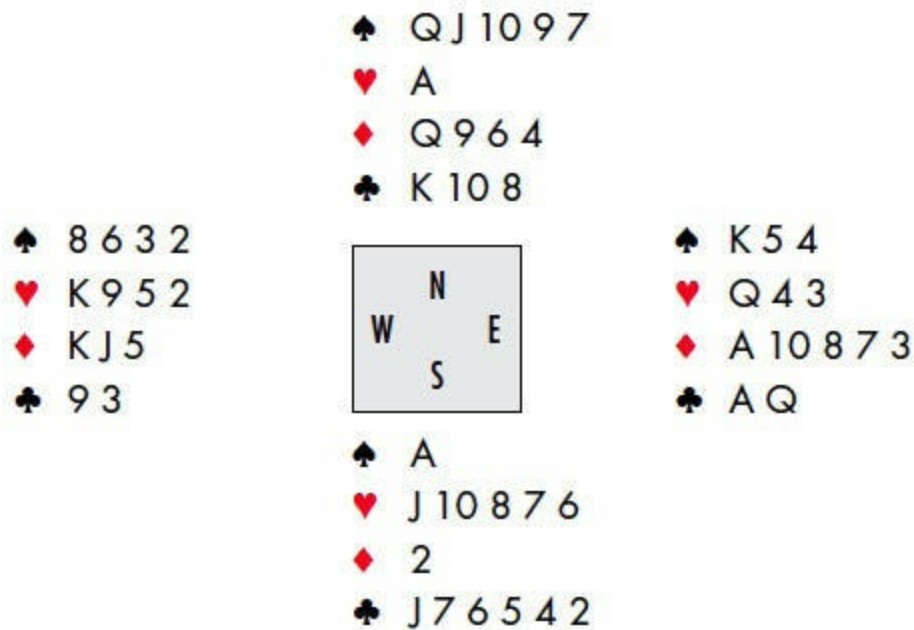
At most tables the bidding started:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♠	1NT	?

At matchpoints I do not want to take +50 or +100 if I have a good chance at +110. So I would bid at matchpoints if the opponents were not vulnerable. What would I bid? I would go with my longest suit, 2♣. The advantage of this bid is that if the opponents compete with 2♦, I can now happily bid 2♥. If they are vulnerable, it is a harder decision at pairs, but I probably lean towards bidding.

Okay, now that we have matchpoints out of the way, let's look at IMP strategy. If you bid, you could go minus. If you bid 2♣ you could actually be doubled, and if the cards are very unlucky you could easily go down two or more for at least -500.

At the same time I do not like to give up -90 or score +50 when my side has a partscore, or even a game. When the opponents are vulnerable at teams I think the decision is clear — pass and lead fourth best from longest and strongest. If partner has a club fit you are likely plus +110 or so, but you are also going to beat 1NT for +200 — or more likely +300 or +400. If you don't have a fit you will go minus playing the hand and still will probably get a plus on defense. You have 6 HCP, RHO has an average of 16, partner has 13 — and West, an average of 5. I don't think 1NT will play that well. Suits are breaking poorly, and your ♠A on his left will be a big surprise to declarer. The full deal:



In the 2009 Bermuda Bowl, in one match the bidding went:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
all pass	1♠	1NT	2♣

In a Venice Cup match one South chose 2♣ and the other 2♥.

On this deal 2♣ makes (+110) while 2♥ wasn't doubled but went down three for -150. East may just manage seven tricks in 1NT; however, switch the ♣A and ♣K and the damage is 300.

## THE ART OF PASSING (2)

Here is a deal that I want to include because it is another example of when passing makes more sense than bidding.

2010 World Open Pairs Final. As South with E-W vul. you hold (hand rotated):

♠ K Q 8 ♥ 9 5 2 ♦ Q J 6 ♣ 10 4 3 2

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	1♠	1♦ 1NT	pass ?

Looks like the points are split 20-20. You have no distribution but a great fit for partner's suit. Your side might be able to make 2♠, but might just as easily go down. If you pass, it will go all pass. What will happen to 1NT? I expect it will go down. Partner has a poor suit so could easily have six of them. Not sure if the 1NT means a spade stopper or not. If East has Jxxx then you might even get doubled in 2♠, and you can still beat 1NT. Pass. At the table the unnamed South placed the contract in 2♠. The full deal:

	♠ A 9 7 6 3	
	♥ K 7 6	
	♦ 10 4 2	
	♣ A 5	
♠ 5		♠ J 10 4 2
♥ A Q 10 8 4		♥ J 3
♦ 9 8 3		♦ A K 7 5
♣ J 8 7 6		♣ K Q 9
	♠ K Q 8	
	♥ 9 5 2	
	♦ Q J 6	
	♣ 10 4 3 2	

So 2♠ is only down one, and 1NT is a lucky make. However, if North had had three clubs, 1NT would have been down a couple.

# PENALTY DOUBLES WHEN THE OPPONENTS OPEN A SUIT AND REBID 1NT

We discussed above doubling a 1NT opening or overcall. However, often the opponents stop in 1NT after opening in a suit. This is actually a better situation in which to extract a penalty from a 1NT contract. The reason is that you have more information. You can tell when suits are sitting poorly for declarer, and you want to be able to penalize the opponents in these situations.

The 1NT bid can be made by either the opener or the responder. So in these auctions I play that a double in either seat is penalty-oriented, with length and values in the suit bid to the right of the doubler. What if you just want to balance, and want partner to pick an unbid suit? I play that 2♣ is artificial and asks partner to do just that.

There is a big difference between doubling directly after the 1NT bid, and when it goes pass, pass to you. In the latter, the passout seat, the opponents have limited their hands by not trying for, or bidding game. This is not true if you are in direct seat, as you are interrupting a ‘live’ auction. So the two situations are very different. First let’s look at the balancing double.

## DOUBLE OF A 1NT REBID IN THE PASSOUT SEAT

Points here are fairly immaterial — you know that the combined high cards are split approximately 20-20, as with more the opponents would have likely conducted an invitational bidding sequence. The *key* factor in deciding whether to double or not is the positional value of your suits and high cards.

With

♠ K J 10 7 5 ♥ 9 6 4 ♦ A 10 5 2 ♣ 2

I would double 1NT on the following auction:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♣	pass	1♠	pass
1NT	pass	pass	?

Yes, it is speculative. But 90% of the time partner will lead a spade. The only time he won't is when he has a better lead.

Tip 47: When partner has doubled 1NT on positional values, leading LHO's suit is almost mandatory. The only exception is when you have a long good suit of your own.

## DOUBLE OF A 1NT REBID IN DIRECT SEAT

Doubling in a non-passout position is trickier. Not only do you need the right holding in RHO's suit, but you also need substantive values, as you are entering a live auction (LHO has not limited his hand). How strong? A decent guideline is 17 HCP, but the type of points and length and strength in RHO's suit will affect your decision. On this auction:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♠	pass	1♣	pass
		1NT	?

I would double with either

♠ 10 5 ♥ AK 7 5 ♦ A 10 ♣ AQ 10 8 7

or

♠ 5 ♥ A 10 9 7 ♦ K 10 ♣ AQJ 7 6 5

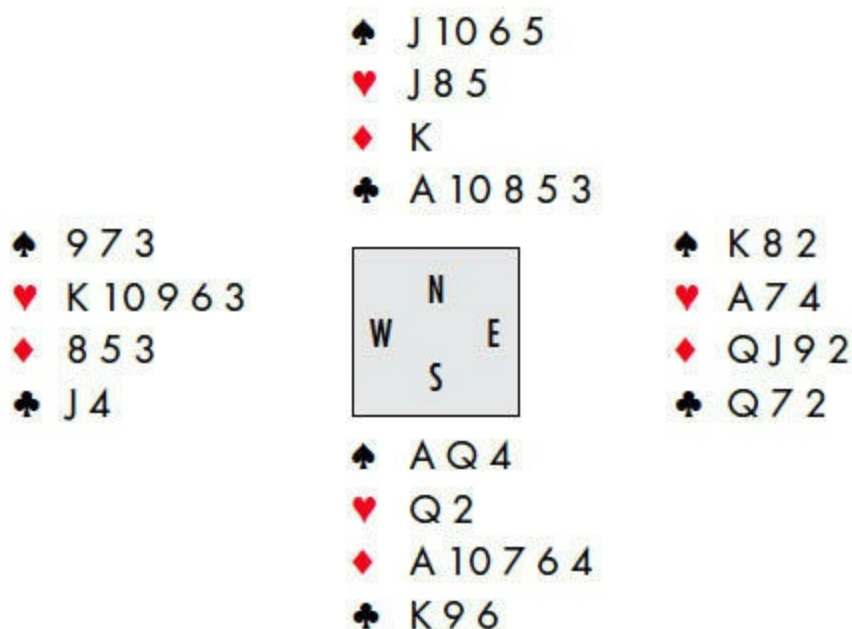
However, I would not double with

♠ 10 5 ♥ K 9 7 ♦ K Q 2 ♣ A Q 10 8 7

I am not overly worried on the last example as I know if West passes, partner will protect me with the right hand.

The following deal offers another reason why it is important to double.

2009 D'Orsi Seniors Bowl, Semifinal. Both vul.



## Open Room

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		1♦	1NT
pass	2♣	pass	2♦
pass	3NT	all pass	

I slightly prefer passing with South's hand, and then doubling, to show my trap pass. Here 3NT only makes because spades are 3-3 and the king is onside, so North-South scored a lucky +600.

In the Closed Room, the bidding by North-South was worse:

## Closed Room

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	pass	1♦ 1NT	pass all pass!

I would double 1NT with either South's or North's hand; although a double by South is risky, it is back to the principle of describing your hand and showing your values. Defending 1NT doubled would get +1100 with average defense (and 2♥ doesn't fare much better). In fact if declarer ducks a heart upon winning the club lead, which is extremely probable, the defense will very likely score +1400. This is much better than +600, or -100. Here is another deal that I rather like:

2010 Rosenblum Cup. Both vul.

	♠ Q 10 8 3 2	
	♥ J 10 9	
	♦ 9 3 2	
	♣ 4 3	
♠ K J 4		♠ 7 6
♥ K Q 5		♥ 7 6 4 2
♦ K Q 8 7 6		♦ J 4
♣ K 9		♣ A Q 10 6 2
	♠ A 9 5	
	♥ A 8 3	
	♦ A 10 5	
	♣ J 8 7 5	

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass dbl	1♠ 2♠	pass pass dbl	1♦ 1NT all pass

West doubled 1NT to show his trap pass of 1♦ and North made a good decision to bid



2♠. East had a very good hand on this auction, and showed it with a double. (East's double is another type of logical value-showing double that is not specifically mentioned in this book.) West also made a good decision by converting for penalties. The resulting +500 was worth 12 IMPs, when the touch-and-go 3NT went down one at the other table.

# DOUBLING TO CHANGE THE CONTRACT

This is a strategy that can work. Sometimes the opponents are bidding two suits — one of which you know will play better than the other. It sometimes pays to double, trying to jockey them out of a makeable spot into a worse one. Here are three different applications, with examples.

- Slam contracts.
- When the opponents bid 3NT and you would rather they played four of a major or five of a minor.
- Game contracts when there are two suits in play.

## SLAM CONTRACTS

This is an easy enough concept. The opponents have bid two or more suits and they have landed in the one that you think will make. You double to get them to bid the one that won't. Fearing a Lightner double, they also might run to notrump.

2006 Fargo Regional. As South you hold:

♠ Q 5 4 2   ♥ 9 2   ♦ A 5 4   ♣ K J 10 2

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	pass	1♠	pass
3♦	pass	5♠	pass
6♥ <sup>1</sup>	pass	pass <sup>2</sup>	?

1. Long thought.
2. Very long thought.

At the 2006 Fargo Regional I doubled, hoping that my double would convince East to run to spades. East obligingly bid 6♠, which I doubled with much more confidence.

## WHEN THE OPPONENTS BID 3NT AND YOU WOULD RATHER THEY PLAYED

## FOUR OF A MAJOR OR FIVE OF A MINOR

This happens most frequently after a preempt.

E-W vul. at IMPs. You hold as South

♠ Q ♥ 6 5 3 2 ♦ Q J 4 3 ♣ Q J 4 2

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	2♠	dbl	pass
3♣ <sup>1</sup>	pass	3♦	pass
3NT	pass	pass	?

1. Showing constructive values, 7-11.

Double! Looks like 3NT will make. The spade situation is close to hopeless unless partner has ♠KJ10xxx and somehow guesses to lead the ♠K. However, you know that West has only one spade stopper. West may well be afraid of a big penalty with short spades in East's hand, and run to the 'safe' 4♦.

The full hypothetical deal:

	♠ A 10 9 7 5 2	
	♥ 10 9 8	
	♦ 5	
	♣ K 7 6	
♠ K 6 3		♠ J 8 4
♥ Q J 4		♥ A K 7
♦ A 10 2		♦ K 9 8 7 6
♣ 10 9 8 5		♣ A 3
	<div> <div>W</div> <div>N</div> <div>E</div> <div>S</div> </div>	
	♠ Q	
	♥ 6 5 3 2	
	♦ Q J 4 3	
	♣ Q J 4 2	

This will go down on a spade lead for +100. Much better than -600!

# GAME CONTRACTS WHEN THERE ARE TWO SUITS IN PLAY

The same principle applies: double if they are in the suit you don't want them to be in. They might sit, in which case there is still the chance that they will go down, even playing you for long trumps. But often they will run to the suit that you want them to play in.

2004 CNTC. As South you hold:

♠ K 5 3   ♥ A 10 8   ♦ 10 2   ♣ J 10 8 7 6

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	2♠	dbl	pass
4♣	pass	4♦	3♠
4♥	pass	pass	pass
			?

I doubled. The full deal (hands rotated):

	♠ A 9 8 6 4 2	
	♥ 6 5 2	
	♦ Q 8 7 3	
	♣ —	
♠ J 7		♠ Q 10
♥ Q 7 3		♥ K J 9 4
♦ J 9 6		♦ A K 5 4
♣ A 9 5 3 2		♣ K Q 4
	♠ K 5 3	
	♥ A 10 8	
	♦ 10 2	
	♣ J 10 8 7 6	

As long as I lead clubs we will beat 4♥ two for +300, but I obviously didn't know this at the time. As I hoped, East bid 5♣, which I doubled with a lot more confidence for the same score. It is interesting to note that West, who I knew well, figured out that I had this type of double and passed, whereas East wasn't sure and ran.

This type of double is well known among experts. However, if you mix it up with

some speculative doubles of games, they are guessing as to which hand type you hold. Let's look at this type of double, where you are rolling the dice...

# SPECULATIVE PENALTY DOUBLES

## HIGH-LEVEL DOUBLES

There are many opportunities to make speculative doubles, but players seldom take advantage of them. The thinking of many players is, ‘I don’t want to have -790 (or -990) on my scorecard.’ Yet, using good judgment, you can improve your bridge success by doubling even when defeat is not a given. This type of double is most effective playing teams, but can be used at pairs as well, as the next example illustrates. It is rarer at matchpoints because -790 vs. -620 is only 5 IMPs, whereas at pairs it is a bottom. Most experts, including myself, believe swinging is a losing strategy in pairs events.

When you make this type of double to the right of declarer, partner is expected to lead dummy’s first-bid suit. So if you don’t want that, you are probably better to pass quietly. Here is an example of using this strategy.

2008 Silodor Pairs. Neither vul., you hold as South (hands rotated):

♠ Q   ♥ A Q 10 7   ♦ Q 10 9 3   ♣ A 8 7 2			
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♦	pass	1♥	pass
1♠	dbl	4♠	?

Dan Jacob is considered amongst the very top Canadian bridge players. On his way to victory in the 2008 Silodor Pairs, Jacob scored a top for his partnership by making a very reasoned double of 4♠. First, he knew this would request a heart lead. Secondly, the opponents were almost for sure on only an eight-card fit, and spades were splitting poorly. Finally, by only bidding 4♠, East showed a lack of slam interest and implied less than an opening bid. The double yielded +300, good for 76.5 out of 77 matchpoints.

As discussed in Chapter 7, you do not want to make a double that will possibly help declarer make a hand when under normal circumstances he wouldn’t. Try this next one with me (actually I already tried it, in the first round of the 2011 CNTC).

Both vul. at IMPs, you hold as South (hands rotated):

<div> ♠ 10 9 8 5 4 ♥ Q 6 5 4 ♦ K ♣ A 9 6 </div>			
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	3♦	dbl	pass
4♠	pass	pass	?

Your preempting style when vulnerable shows a decent hand, even in third seat, but can have non-traditional shape.

In Chapter 4, I discussed processing speed and bidding in tempo. As soon as I heard partner’s preempt I was already trying to decide what to do if the opponents bid game in a major. Should I try a speculative double or not? At the table I bid in tempo when 4♠ came round to me, and the bid was pass.

However, this auction and hand lends itself beautifully to a speculative penalty double. Partner rates to have at least a couple of cards. The preempt might have caused one or both of the opponents to have less than desirable values or distribution for their calls. Declarer will half-way expect a foul trump break whatever I do. The other plus is that I might induce partner to lead a diamond from ♦AJ10xxx or the like. If I am wrong, oh well, there go 5 IMPs (actually, 2 IMPs as it turned out). However, they could easily be on only a seven-card fit, and go for a big number.

The full deal (hands rotated):

	♠ —	
	♥ J 8	
	♦ A Q J 6 5 3	
	♣ J 10 7 5 4	
♠ J 7 6 3 2	<div> <div> <div>N</div> <div>W</div> <div>S</div> <div>E</div> </div> </div>	♠ A K Q
♥ A 10 9		♥ K 7 3 2
♦ 10 8 7 2		♦ 9 4
♣ Q		♣ K 8 3 2
	♠ 10 9 8 5 4	
	♥ Q 6 5 4	
	♦ K	
	♣ A 9 6	

As it turned out, 4♠ went down two. We gained 3 IMPs when our partners bid more accurately at the other table, stopping in three. Had I doubled, the 3 IMP gain would have turned into 9. If they had made it, we would have lost 12 IMPs instead of 10.

Yes, West’s 4♠ was a poor bid, perhaps the result of pressure from a match going poorly for his side. In Chapter 7 we looked at how to respond to a takeout double of a preempt, and how the expected high-card range for a minimum reply is around 8 HCP — using this guide, 3♠ is more than enough by West.

Tip 48: Playing teams, against good opponents, consider doubling their vulnerable games when they have an invitational auction and you know things are breaking badly.

Finally a deal that combines these last two doubles, making a speculative double and hoping that it will change the contract into one that is not successful!

2007 European Spring Foursomes. Both vul., you hold as South

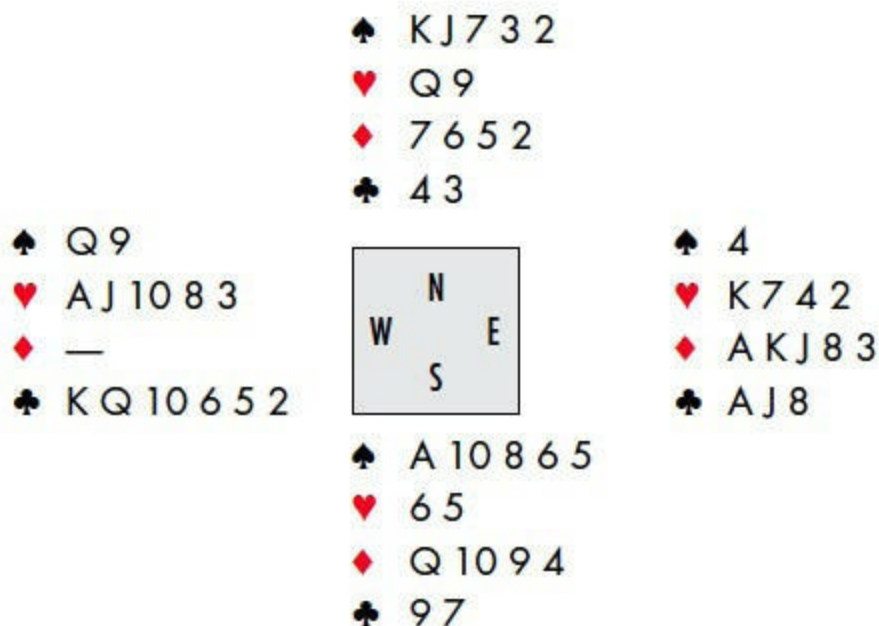
♠ A 10 8 6 5   ♥ 6 5   ♦ Q 10 9 4   ♣ 9 7

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		1♦	pass
2♣	pass	2♥	pass
3♥	pass	4♣	pass
4♦	pass	4NT	pass
6♦ <sup>1</sup>	pass	6♥	?

1. One ace plus a diamond void.

You guessed it — South, feeling his side was down a bit in the match, doubled! When it came back to East, he envisioned hands where the heart suit was not solid. Fearing a bad break he ran to 6NT — not a success! The full deal (hands rotated):





## LOW-LEVEL SPECULATIVE DOUBLES

This is a different type of speculation. The opponents enter the auction with minimal values and bid up to 1NT or two of a minor, which is sometimes right but sometimes wrong. This is when they are most vulnerable to a double.

You won't get another chance because one of them will certainly pass, telling his partner, 'Don't bid any more!' It is quite often right to try and penalize them, especially at teams, rather than for your side to declare with modest values. Sometimes partner will make you choose. You know declaring will be iffy at best, so why not go for the gold? If they make it, oh well, -180. But more often than not they won't. I will show you what I mean.

Because it happened this way in real life, I am going to use two examples that came up back to back involving the same player and the same decision.

2010 Rosenblum Cup. Both vul., you hold as South (hands rotated)

♠ Q76 ♥ 10876 ♦ J2 ♣ J953

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	dbl	pass	pass
pass	dbl	1NT	pass
		pass	?

Okay, what do you know? East has about 7-9 HCP, with fewer than three hearts. After making an initial double, partner has doubled 1NT. He knows that you are close to broke, so he must have a very good hand. How good? At least 18 HCP and probably more. Why? He knows from the bidding that you have roughly 0-2. He likely also has two hearts, which means he should have even more high cards. On this bidding you have more than you should. And finally it dawns on you that West might have opened light in third seat. Whatever the case, this is an easy pass!

The more I think about this deal, the surer I am about passing and the less speculative it feels. I think they are going down, and 2♣, which is what South bid, will be iffy. The full deal:

	♠ A K 10	
	♥ A 5	
	♦ A Q 10 9 3	
	♣ A 4 2	
♠ J 5 4 2		♠ 9 8 3
♥ Q J 9 4 2		♥ K 3
♦ 8 7		♦ K 6 5 4
♣ K 6		♣ Q 10 8 7
	♠ Q 7 6	
	♥ 10 8 7 6	
	♦ J 2	
	♣ J 9 5 3	

Defending 1NT doubled would have resulted in +800. And the very next deal, with both vul., he held:

♠ A K 7 2   ♥ Q 5   ♦ 9 8   ♣ A J 8 7 2			
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	1NT	pass	1♦ <sup>1</sup>
2♦	dbl	pass	pass
			?

1. Precision.

Partner has 8-10 HCP and has denied a four-card major and you have 14 HCP. Is partner's double 100% penalty? No, but it is highly suggestive. You only have two diamonds, but lots of points, any diamond honors are behind declarer, and your side has no eight-card fit. Plus, you know from the last deal that West likes to bid. Pass! The full deal:

	♠ Q J 3	
	♥ A J 7	
	♦ Q J 7 6	
	♣ 6 5 3	
♠ 9 8		♠ 10 6 5 4
♥ K 9 8		♥ 10 6 4 3 2
♦ A K 5 3 2		♦ 10 4
♣ K 10 9		♣ Q 4
	<div> <div> <div>N</div> <div>W</div> <div>E</div> <div>S</div> </div> </div>	
	♠ A K 7 2	
	♥ Q 5	
	♦ 9 8	
	♣ A J 8 7 2	

Declarer will likely escape for down three, but +500 is better than +140.

# THE 2NT RUNOUT

In the 2010 CNTC we had a narrow win in one match that could have been more had I got this one right. Neither vul., you as North hold

♠ 8 4   ♥ Q 9 7 4 2   ♦ J 9 5   ♣ A 10 4			
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
2♥	pass	pass	1♣
pass	?	2NT	pass

Had East passed, I would have passed 2♥ doubled. Do I penalize 2NT? I chose not to double. The full deal:

	♠ 8 4	
	♥ Q 9 7 4 2	
	♦ J 9 5	
	♣ A 10 4	
♠ 2	<div>W<div>N S</div>E</div>	♠ K J 7 5
♥ A K J 10 5		♥ 8 6
♦ 8 4 3		♦ Q 10 6 2
♣ K 9 8 5		♣ Q 7 2
	♠ A Q 10 9 6 3	
	♥ 3	
	♦ A K 7	
	♣ J 6 3	

At the other table 2♥ doubled went for -500. We beat 2NT two for +100, and lost 9 IMPs. I discussed this hand with East later. He said he has used this 2NT bid in the past to ward off a possible reopening double and a penalty pass. Running later will almost always fetch a double. One key to this bid is to have soft values with stoppers in the

opener's suit.

In retrospect I think a double by me, though a bit aggressive, is right. Partner now knows to lead a heart, which should be best and avoid giving away a trick. Doubling also will allow partner to place you with some high cards that he likely would not otherwise. So doubling might well have led to down four, +800.

# CATERING TO PARTNER BEING ABLE TO CONVERT A DOUBLE TO PENALTIES

As much as possible you want to try and penalize the opponents either when they step out of line or when bad breaks will doom their aggressive contract. In this vein, I have stressed the importance of protecting partner when playing negative doubles, as well as making speculative doubles and positional doubles when the opponents stop in 1NT.

This is similar. You have two choices, a suit bid and a double. Try to make the double whenever you can handle the rest of the auction. Here is an example of what this rare type of double looks like:

2011 CNTC. As South, with both vul., you hold:

♠ 9 ♥ Q J 10 8 ♦ K 10 9 6 3 2 ♣ K 6			
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♠	pass	pass 2♠	pass ?

You have a hand with very good playing strength. As a passed hand you can now safely enter the auction. Bidding 3♦ is certainly reasonable, and was the action taken at the other table. I doubled. My thinking was that if partner had hearts, great. If he bid clubs, I would convert to diamonds — he would know my diamonds were longer than my hearts since I hadn't bid 2NT, showing a two-suiter. The extra chance comes in when partner can convert your double to penalties. The full deal (hands rotated):

	♠ K Q J 10	
	♥ K 4	
	♦ Q 8 5	
	♣ J 10 9 7	
♠ A 8 7 6 5	<div> <div>W</div> <div>N</div> <div>E</div> <div>S</div> </div>	♠ 4 3 2
♥ A 9 7 3		♥ 6 5 2
♦ A		♦ J 7 4
♣ Q 8 5		♣ A 4 3 2
	♠ 9	
	♥ Q J 10 8	
	♦ K 10 9 6 3 2	
	♣ K 6	

Instead of your side being +110 in 3♦, the opponents end up in 2♠ doubled, down two for +500 on a nothing hand.

# Chapter 10



# WHAT I HAVE LEARNED

This chapter discusses a variety of miscellaneous bidding issues, and what experience suggests to me is the best approach in each case.

# STRONG TWO-CLUB OPENERS AND BIDS AT THE GAME LEVEL

Since by opening 2♣ you start the bidding one level higher, you are often still investigating fits at the four-level. This can get awkward sometimes. My suggestion is:

Tip 49: If the 2♣ opener raises partner's suit to the game level it is forcing. Responder is obligated to cuebid his lowest first- or second-round control.

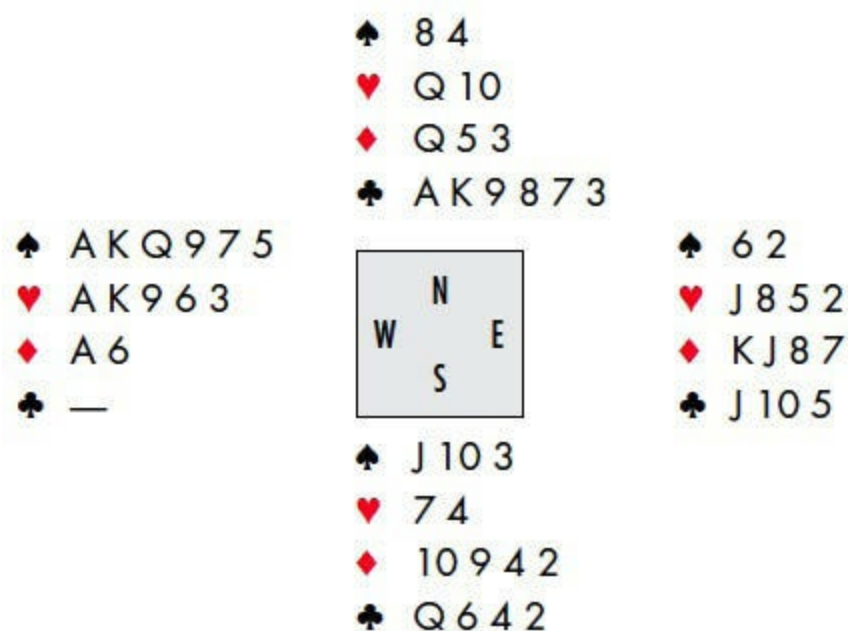
So when the two hands are, for example:

♠ A K Q J 4 2	♠ 6 5
♥ A K 5 2	♥ Q J 9 6 4 3
♦ A	♦ K Q 4 2
♣ 6 2	♣ 3
<hr/>	
<b>WEST</b>	<b>EAST</b>
<hr/>	
2♣	2♦
2♠	3♥
4♥	5♣
6♥	

If 4♥ is forcing, a scientific auction can take place without the 2♣ bidder having to worry about getting passed.

However, things can get very difficult when the opponents get into your 2♣ auction. Here is a real toughie! Both sides in one match had problems. I will see if I can shed any light on this matter.

2010 Rosenblum Cup. Neither vul.



## Open Room

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
2♠	pass	2NT	pass
4♥	all pass		

I am not sure what went wrong on this auction. I think, however, that East-West were playing a very natural system, with 2NT negative, and that 4♥ was stronger than 3♥ would have been. If so, I would bid 5♦ with the East hand. At the other table it was harder:

## Closed Room

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
2♣	3♣	dbl	4♣
4♠	all pass		

In the Daily Bulletin, Mark Horton reasonably suggests that 5♣ would have been a better second bid by West. I completely agree. But what do bids mean here and are they forcing? Over 4♣ I think that the following should apply to West's calls:

dbl        balanced 22-24 (or whatever range you're playing).  
 4M        one-suiter, non-forcing.  
 pass      two-suiter, three losers.  
 5♣        two-suiter with a very good hand, usually two losers.

Along the same veins, a 2NT or 3NT bid by responder does not promise specific stoppers but denies support or a biddable suit.

♠ A K Q J 7 4	♠ 3 2
♥ A K 4 2	♥ Q J 9
♦ A	♦ K Q 9
♣ 8 7	♣ 6 5 4 3 2
<hr/>	
<b>WEST</b>	<b>EAST</b>
<hr/>	
2♣	2♦
2♠	2NT <sup>1</sup>
3♥	3NT <sup>2</sup>
4♠ <sup>3</sup>	

1. Denies three or more spades, or a five-card biddable suit.
2. Denies four hearts; may or may not have stoppers in the unbid suits (3♠ is a reasonable alternative bid).
3. 6-4. This is not a drop-dead bid, but a natural, descriptive bid. If responder likes his hand he can take another call in support of spades (but not 4NT — this would be to play).

# CUEBIDS AT THE GAME LEVEL

Quite often this type of auction occurs:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♠	3♦	?

A 4♠ bid here is best played as ‘I want to play in 4♠’, maybe showing something like

♠ K Q 8 2 ♥ 5 2 ♦ 6 ♣ Q 10 9 4 3 2

But what if you hold

♠ K Q 8 2 ♥ A K 2 ♦ 6 4 ♣ Q 10 9 2

You want partner to know you have full values for your game bid. The way to do this is to bid 4♦.

The lesson from my experience is that this bid should not promise a diamond control. If partner is interested in slam he can cuebid or raise to 5♠ to inquire about diamonds.

Here is a hand that occurred in a local team game: the player was stuck.

N-S vul., teams. You hold as South

♠ 9 2 ♥ A K 5 ♦ 9 8 7 ♣ A J 10 8 7

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♦	1♠	2♣
3♠	4♦	pass	?

He was afraid of bidding 4♥ in case it went all pass, and couldn't cuebid spades as this promised a control in his system. In any case, bidding 4♥ is also misguided as partner is forced to bid slam with a spade control, when in fact you want his opinion on slam. So the actual South simply bid 5♦ and missed an easy slam, as partner held:

♠ A 2 ♥ 8 7 6 ♦ A K J 6 5 3 2 ♣ 2

If 4♠ is simply a slam try, without promising a spade control, bidding becomes much easier!

# BIDDING WITH A GOOD TWO-SUITER

Many experts have the agreement that a conventional two-suited overcall is either weak or strong. I fully subscribe to this theory. Over 1♣ I would bid 2♣ (Michaels) with either

♠ A K Q 4 3 ♥ A K J 10 3 ♦ 3 2 ♣ 5

or

♠ J 10 9 8 2 ♥ K J 10 8 2 ♦ 3 2 ♣ 5

When you hold a hand of intermediate strength, roughly 10-16 HCP, I recommend overcalling one suit, listening to the bidding and then deciding whether it is wise to bid your second suit.

I feel this way because adding a third strength type makes it too difficult for the partnership to judge accurately against competition from the opponents (see Chapter 8).

Let's say you hold as South

♠ K J 4 3 ♥ 3 2 ♦ 6 5 4 3 ♣ A 5 2

E-W vul. at IMPs:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♦	2♦	3♦	3♠
5♦	dbl	pass	?

If North has

♠ A Q J 5 2 ♥ A K 10 5 4 ♦ A ♣ 4 3

which is about a minimum for a strong hand, then you want to be in 6♠. But if he has

♠ A J 6 5 2 ♥ A J 10 5 4 ♦ A ♣ 4 3

you don't. That is why it is best to overcall 1♠ over 1♦, bid hearts next, and then listen.

The reasoning is that it is just too difficult for advancer to decide whether he should be bidding for a make, sacrificing or staying silent when overcaller has a very wide range of holdings. The stronger hand should be around 4-5 losers with 16+ HCP. With the strong hand overcaller should double at his second turn to bid, regardless of the level, and then advancer has all the information he needs to make the best decision.

2009 Bermuda Bowl. E-W vul.

				♠ AKJ 8 6			
				♥ A			
				♦ AJ 8 7 3			
				♣ Q 2			
♠ 9 2							♠ Q 7 3
♥ K Q J 10 6 5							♥ 9 4 3 2
♦ K							♦ Q 5 4
♣ AK 6 3							♣ J 10 8

Perfect! North described very closely what he had, so could pass 3♠ with reasonable confidence. At the other table the auction was less effective:





WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		pass	1♣
2NT <sup>1</sup>	dbl	5♥	pass
6♣	dbl	6♥	dbl
all pass			

1. Red suits.

I am not sure what West was thinking opposite an obvious sacrifice. Maybe they had an unusual agreement of some kind. They still might have made 6♥ without her silly 6♣ bid, which said to the opponents, ‘I wouldn’t lead clubs if I were you, as I don’t have any.’ South took her at her word and led a spade for +200.

## Closed Room

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		pass	1♣
1♥	1♠	4♥	pass
pass	dbl	pass	4♠
5♥	dbl	all pass	

In the Closed Room, West bid much more sensibly in my view. She found out partner had a hand where she wanted to play in 4♥, and judging from the opposition bidding, this was surely a sacrifice. She was happy to play in 4♥ doubled. Over the good pull by South I think I would have set up the defense to 5♠ by bidding 5♣. That would have cost an overtrick in 5♥, as the defense would otherwise surely lead clubs, but that is only a 1 IMP difference from +1250 to +1050.

One final example, from the 2009 Vanderbilt Final, E-W vul.

## Open Room

## Closed Room

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		1♦	2♦
2♠	4♥	pass	pass
5♣	pass	5♦	5♥
pass	pass	dbl	all pass

More to the point neither North got a chance to sacrifice, which was the winning action. In the Open Room, South reasonably gambled he could beat 5♦. He was wrong.

His counterpart chose a better percentage action, but both players were guessing.

Had South simply overcalled 1♠ in the first place, the bidding would have gone something like this:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		1♦	1♠
2♣	3♠	pass	4♥
5♦	?		

Now North is in much better position to judge what to do. He knows that South very well may be bidding on shape, so he can be involved in the decision. Here he would have a fairly easy 5♠, although he will likely have to bid 6♠ if they carry on to slam.

# SHOWING YOUR VALUES

Tip 50: Show your values. I believe it is very important to announce these values, even when the opponents are bidding and partner is not.

It is sometimes risky, but it is risky both ways, as the following two examples will attest:

2010 Rosenblum Cup. Neither vul.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	pass	pass	1♦
2♣	pass	2NT	?
	♠ 8 7 4		
	♥ Q 10 9 6 2		
	♦ J 9		
	♣ K 10 9		
♠ 9 6 2			♠ K Q J 3
♥ 4			♥ 8 5 3
♦ 10 8 4			♦ Q 7 5 2
♣ A J 8 7 5 4			♣ Q 6

South chose to pass and missed the cold heart game (notice West's 2♣ bid, a tactic discussed in Chapter 3 under 'reverse preempts'). Several of us talked about the deal the next morning at breakfast. The consensus was that you need to show your values.

Here is the same theme with very similar bidding. North's hand type is different, but North-South still got talked out of their game:

2009 Venice Cup. N-S vul.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♦	pass	2NT	1♣ ?
♠ 4 3 ♥ J 6 ♦ K Q J 4 2 ♣ Q 9 3 2	♠ J 10 8 7 5 ♥ 10 9 7 4 2 ♦ 9 7 ♣ 5 <div><div>W</div><div>N</div><div>E</div><div>S</div></div> ♠ K Q 9 6 ♥ A Q 3 ♦ A 5 ♣ A 10 8 6	♠ A 2 ♥ K 8 5 ♦ 10 8 6 3 ♣ K J 7 4	

At the table South passed, as did everyone else, and 2NT went down three for -150. This was a 12 IMP loss when at the other table East-West took a sacrifice in 5♦.

This is what happens when you do not show your values. Non-vulnerable opponents will bid a lot with a little, if they feel this will persuade you to miss a vulnerable game. South should have doubled 2NT. North should then realize her great playing strength opposite a 19-20 HCP hand with both majors, and bid 4♦, asking partner to take a preference to her better major.

As a guideline it is safer to show your values earlier in the auction. This is because the opponents have not had the opportunity to fully communicate their distributions and strength, and are less likely to double you when that is right.

Let's revisit a Granovetter "Partnership Bridge" column from 2007. Neither vul., teams, as South you hold:

♠ A Q 10 8   ♥ K 10   ♦ Q J 8 4 3   ♣ K 6

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♠	pass	1NT	?

# What do you do?

You need to show your values. LHO could have as few as 10 HCP, and RHO as few as 5 HCP. Potentially, you might even be in the game range. You need to bid *now*! Double. Partner knows you have at least a good opening bid, and you won't get shut out if you have a game. If partner bids clubs, you can convert to diamonds. If he jumps to 3♣, you can bid 3NT.

If you decide to pass and wait, the bidding will continue as follows.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♠	pass	1NT	pass
2♥	pass	pass	?

Is this easier? No. Sure the opponents have stopped bidding at the two-level, but that may be as much about having no fit as about high cards. To make matters worse, a bid by you is only balancing, and can be made on a much weaker hand. The full deal, from the USBC:

♠ KJ632  
♥ A973  
♦ 9  
♣ Q75

♠ 95  
♥ QJ54  
♦ AK5  
♣ 10943

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ 74  
♥ 862  
♦ 10762  
♣ AJ82

♠ AQ108  
♥ K10  
♦ QJ843  
♣ K6

Matthew and Pamela, to me, focused on the wrong issue, discussing whether North should make a takeout double of 1♠ and whether South should overcall 2♦. For the reasons alluded to above, double by South on the first round of bidding is definitely the best action in the long run.



# EXTENDED LEBENSOHL

A lot of experts play Lebensohl in a great variety of situations. The theory is that in a competitive auction 2NT is never natural, but shows a non-invitational hand and is forcing to 3♣, so that the 2NT bidder can sign off in an unspecified suit. It allows the partnership to save a direct bid to show more constructive values, consistent with the auction to date. For example:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♠	2♣	2♠	pass
pass	dbl	pass	?

Here, 2NT would force partner to bid 3♣ and South would then sign off by either passing or bidding a new suit. An immediate bid would be constructive showing some values, in this case in the 5-8 range.

Lebensohl is a two-edged sword, however, as the opponents get the same information you do. Here is an example.

2010 World Open Pairs. Both vul. (hands rotated).

	♠ J 8	
	♥ K J 10 6 3	
	♦ A Q 5	
	♣ A Q 5	
♠ 5 4 3	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">             N W      E S           </div>	♠ A K 10 9 7
♥ A 5		♥ Q 2
♦ J 10 2		♦ K 9 8 4
♣ K J 8 7 6		♣ 4 2
	♠ Q 6 2	
	♥ 9 8 7 4	
	♦ 7 6 3	
	♣ 10 9 3	

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
<i>Grue</i>	<i>Kimelman</i>	<i>Cheek</i>	<i>Gohl</i>
		1♠	pass
2♠	dbl	pass	2NT <sup>1</sup>
dbl	3♣*	pass	3♥
dbl	all pass		

1. Weak hand, forces 3♣ to sign off.

Grue might have doubled anyway, but on this sequence it was easy. Down one for -200 got us only 10 out of 70 matchpoints (-100 would have been an average).

# FIT BIDS

I endorse fit bids. They are an effective tool for determining how well the hands mesh. They are helpful in evaluating whether to bid game or slam or (as we will look at here) in deciding what to do in competitive auctions. The only caution I urge is that the information they provide is equally useful to the opponents. It is analogous to signaling count on defense. You can tell partner you have four cards in a suit, but declarer is also privy to that information, and will use it to his benefit.

Fit bids are effective when partner opens or overcalls. They also work when partner is preempting and the other side doubles for takeout. Unfortunately they only work if you listen to your partner...

2010 D’Orsi Seniors Bowl. E-W vul.

<div> <div> ♠ K</div> <div>♥ K 9 7</div> <div>♦ Q 9 2</div> <div>♣ AK 10 8 4 3</div> </div> <div> <div>♠ 10 7 5 4 3 2</div> <div>♥ J 8 4</div> <div>♦ 10 4</div> <div>♣ Q J</div> </div>			
<div> <div>♠ AJ 9 8</div> <div>♥ 2</div> <div>♦ AK 8 7</div> <div>♣ 7 6 5 2</div> </div> <div> <div>♠ Q 6</div> <div>♥ AQ 10 6 5 3</div> <div>♦ J 6 5 3</div> <div>♣ 9</div> </div>			
<div> <div>♠</div> <div>♥</div> <div>♦</div> <div>♣</div> </div> <div> <div>W</div> <div>N</div> <div>E</div> <div>S</div> </div>			
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		pass	2♥
dbl	4♣ <sup>1</sup>	4♠	5♥!!
dbl	all pass		

1. Fit jump.

I do not know what possessed South to bid 5♥, knowing that his partner had clubs. He should clearly pass. If partner reopens with a double, which is likely on this deal, South should pass. Take the +200 (although declarer might misguess the spade position, and go for 500, but that is not likely). On this deal, 5♥ doubled went down two for -300.

Revisiting an example from Chapter 3, my partner held as South:

♠ K 6 3 2   ♥ 5 4   ♦ Q J 9 5 3   ♣ 6 3

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♣	1♠	dbl	3♠

I like a 3♦ fit bid much more than the 3♠ bid actually made, as it gets the essence of your hand communicated to partner.

## 2/1 AUCTIONS

In a 2/1 structure there are some decisions your partnership needs to make regarding the meaning of a rebid by opener of two of a major, 2NT and three of a minor. So let's say your bidding starts:

OPENER	RESPONDER
1♠	2♥
?	

These are my preferred meanings for opener's rebids, and why:

2NT usually 14+, but could be 11-13 with uncertainty about where to play.

3NT 12-13. Bad hand, slow values, misfit for hearts and good stoppers in the minors.

2♠ a six-card suit, says nothing about strength. Usually denies three hearts.

3♣/3♦ at least 5-4 shape, says nothing about values.

3♠ shows a solid six-card or longer suit.

The issue is that some players like to play that 3♣ and 3♦ show a better than minimum hand. This means that either 2♠ or 2NT becomes the default bid with a minimum 5-4 hand. To me this is wrong. It now creates a level of ambiguity for all of these bids. When I have two spades, I want to know whether partner has five or six. I want to know what a 2NT bid means. Also what does opener do when he has five spades and *five* clubs and 11 or 12 HCP? Rebid 2♠? Rebid 2NT? No, he is going to bid clubs. In my structure the assumption is that 3♣ could be a minimum. There is still time for either hand to invite slam with extra values, usually with a quantitative 4NT.

# Chapter 11

# HIGHLIGHT REEL

It stands to reason that many of the examples in this book involve poor judgment, by myself or other players. These are lessons — deals that we can look back on and (we hope) learn from. Whenever a bad result occurs, we need to ask ourselves the following questions:

- Why did we get this result?
- Was it just a bad break or some other against-the-odds occurrence?
- How can we do better in the future in similar situations?

So by contrast, I want to take this chapter to celebrate players who have learned from previous experience to get some difficult hands right. Enjoy and learn!

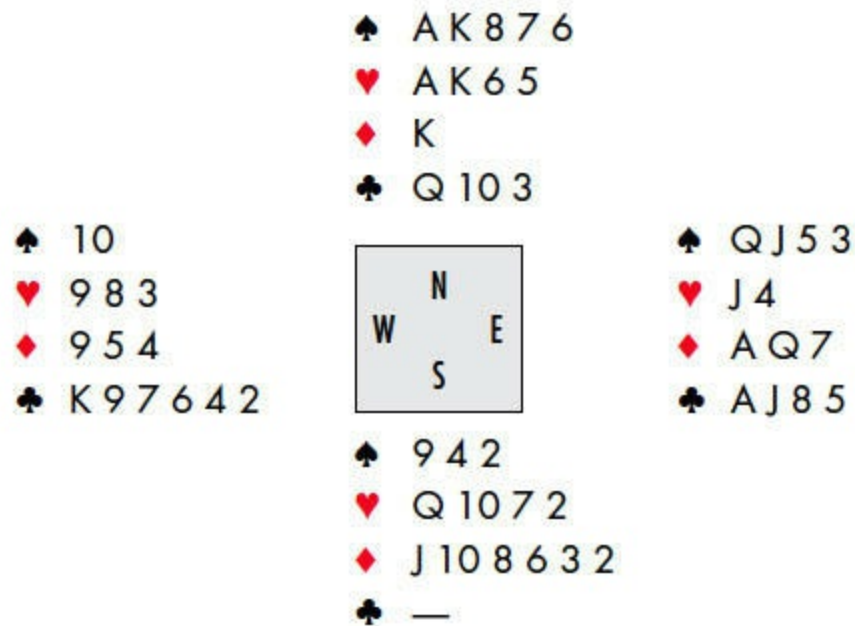
2009 Bermuda Bowl. Neither vul., you hold as South

♠ 9 4 2 ♥ Q 10 7 2 ♦ J 10 8 6 3 2 ♣ —

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	<i>Hamman</i>		<i>Zia</i>
		1NT	pass
2♠ <sup>1</sup>	dbl	2NT <sup>2</sup>	pass
3♣	dbl	pass	?

1. Transfer to clubs.
2. Likes clubs.

Zia knew that Hamman had a very good hand to come in after a strong notrump opening. He likely had a club fragment of sorts, therefore did not have support for all unbid suits. He probably had spades. So, to emphasize his club void and ensure they arrived at the best contract, Zia bid 4♣. Hamman bid 4♠, which ended the auction. The full deal:



Despite the bad trump break, 4♠ made for a 12 IMP gain when North-South sold out to 3♣ at the other table.

### *Lessons to Learn*

- Like Hamman on this hand, it is important to show extra values, even if it is a bit risky.
- Visualize the type of hand partner has, not only for his bids, but also from the risk factor. Here, because of the strong notrump on Hamman's left, Zia knew his partner had a very good hand.
- If you don't know the best contract, try to get your partner's input.

2008 Gold Cup. This deal won the IBPA Precision Best Bid Hand of the Year award. North-South were Stuart and Gerald Tredinnick of England.



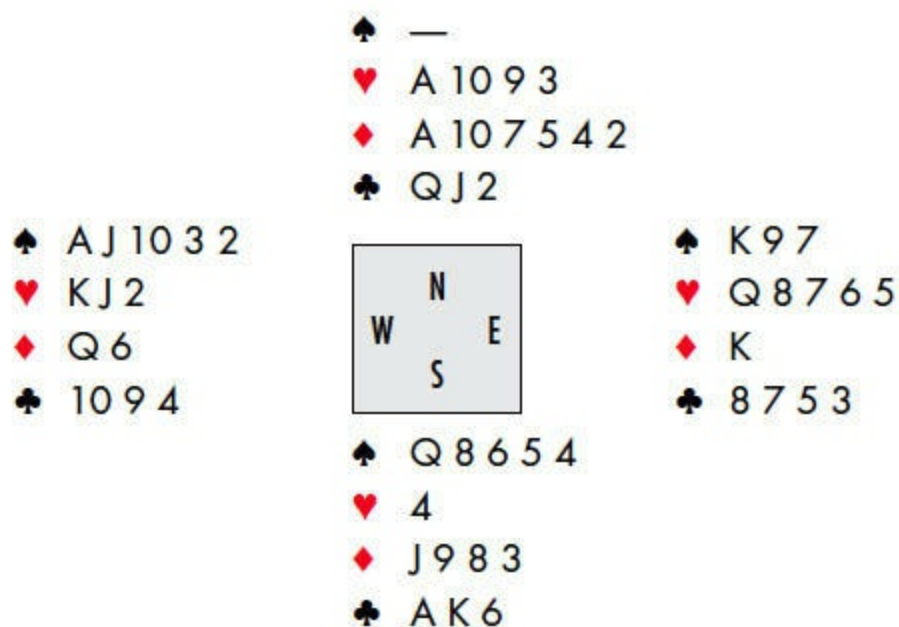
	♠ K 9 8 7 5	
	♥ Q J 5	
	♦ A Q 7	
	♣ Q 9	
♠ Q 10 3	<div> <div>W</div> <div>N</div> <div>E</div> <div>S</div> </div>	♠ J 6 4 2
♥ 9 6 3 2		♥ 8 4
♦ J 9 2		♦ K 10 4 3
♣ J 7 5		♣ 10 6 3
	♠ A	
	♥ A K 10 7	
	♦ 8 6 5	
	♣ A K 8 4 2	

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	<i>Stuart</i>		<i>Gerald</i>
pass	1NT <sup>1</sup>	pass	2♣
pass	2♠	pass	3♣
pass	3NT	pass	4♥
pass	5♣	pass	5NT
pass	6♥	all pass	

1. 14-16.

A beautiful natural auction. Gerald emphasized his good heart suit with 4♥, and after that the key was the last two bids. Gerald's 5NT gave partner a choice of slams. Stuart visualized exactly what partner might have in the red suits, with either the ♠A or ♦K. He made the winning decision to get to a great slam on a 4-3 fit.

2007 Mitchell Open Board-a-Match Teams. E-W vul.



WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	<i>Martel</i>		<i>Stansby</i>
1♠	2♦	2♠	3♠
pass	4♥	pass	4NT
pass	6♦	all pass	

Stansby knew that he had a big hand for offense. He had four-card support, a ruffing value, and little wastage opposite the known spade void. He told partner that by cuebidding. Martel in turn was not embarrassed by his hand and bid his second suit. Then came RKCB and the conclusion. This is an extremely good slam despite there being only 19 working HCP between the two hands.

### *Lessons to Learn*

- I admit I would have made a takeout double with Martel's hand, and not arrived at slam. The advantage of 2♦ is you do get to show your best suit and potentially find a big fit, as in this deal.
- When partner has cuebid in support of your suit, the first thing to do is analyze whether you have the values for your call. If not, it is usually best to tell partner, and this is done by returning to your suit.
- With full values, bid naturally. With no second suit, bid a fragment where you have values.
- Like Stansby in this hand, do not consider doubling the opponents for penalties

with poor spots in their suit (even when you have five trumps) *and* a big fit with partner.

2010 Rosenblum Cup. Both vul.

	♠ A K J	
	♥ A 10 7 3	
	♦ J 8 2	
	♣ K 5 4	
♠ 9 7 6	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">           N W       E S         </div>	♠ 5 4 2
♥ J 8 4 2		♥ Q 9 6
♦ 6 5 4		♦ A 9
♣ J 9 7		♣ Q 10 8 3 2
	♠ Q 10 8 3	
	♥ K 5	
	♦ K Q 10 7 3	
	♣ A 6	

North-South are cold for 6♦ or 6NT, but the Daily Bulletin reported that only thirteen of the 130 pairs who held these cards bid a slam. I am happy to say my partnership was one of those, and I was very proud of our auction:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	<i>Kimelman</i>		<i>Gohl</i>
			1♦
pass	1♥	pass	1♠ <sup>1</sup>
pass	2♣ <sup>2</sup>	pass	2NT <sup>3</sup>
pass	3♦ <sup>4</sup>	pass	3♥ <sup>5</sup>
pass	4♥ <sup>6</sup>	pass	5♦ <sup>7</sup>
pass	6♦ <sup>8</sup>	all pass	

1. Unbalanced hand.
2. Fourth suit forcing.
3. Club stopper, either 4=1=5=3 or 4=2=5=2.
4. Sets diamonds as trumps, slam try.

5. Accepting the slam try, cuebid (cuebid of king is okay in a suit bid by partner), confirms 4=2=5=2 shape, thus has ♣Ax for stopper.

6. Keycard.

7. Two with ♦Q.

8. Conclusion, knowing partner is ♠?xxx ♥Kx ♦KQxxx ♣Ax, and that the spade honor is likely the queen since he is cooperating.

### Lessons to Learn

- For us the first cuebid in a suit is a first-round control. The only exception is the king in one of partner's suits.
- Have sound agreements, and be disciplined.

The next example, bid by fellow Canadians Eric Kokish and Peter Nagy, won the IBPA Romex Award for the Best Bid hand of 1978.

West	East
♠ A 7	♠ K Q 10 2
♥ A 8	♥ 5 4 3 2
♦ 7 6	♦ 8
♣ A K 10 9 7 3 2	♣ Q 8 6 4

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
Kokish		Nagy	
	1♦	pass	1♥
2♣	pass	4♣ <sup>1</sup>	pass
4♥ <sup>2</sup>	pass	4♠ <sup>3</sup>	pass
4NT <sup>4</sup>	pass	6♣ <sup>5</sup>	pass
all pass			

1. Preemptive.
2. A definite slam try.
3. A value-showing cuebid.
4. My last slam try below game. Please tell me more.
5. I have a diamond control, more spade help and a high trump honor. Could you

expect more?

### *Lessons to Learn*

- Using 4NT as a general slam try works well when one hand is much weaker than the other.
- Nagy was able to shift his mindset from preempting the opponents to showing values opposite a slam-minded partner.

2009 Wagar Women's KO. E-W vul., you hold as South (hands rotated):

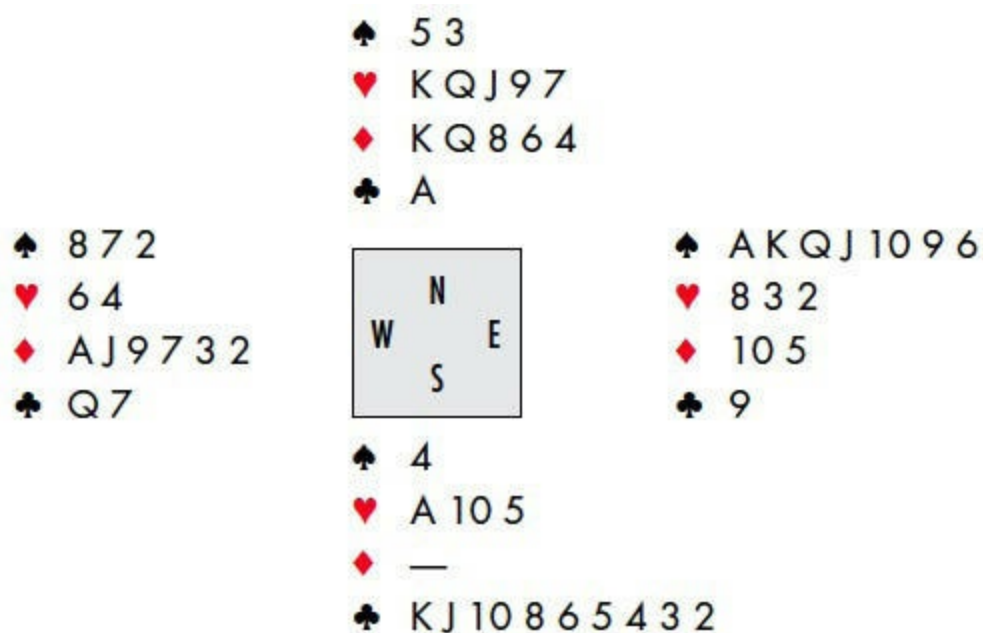
♠ 4   ♥ A 10 5   ♦ —   ♣ K J 10 8 6 5 4 3 2			
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	Kennedy		Bernstein
	1♥	3♠	4♣
4♠	pass	pass	?

What would you bid now?

I can only speculate about the thought process that led to Cindy Bernstein bidding 6♣, but my guess it was something like this:

*Obviously there is a lot of distribution on this hand. East rates to have very good spades to preempt at this vulnerability. West raised so partner likely has no spade honors, except possibly the ace. Partner did not double 4♠, so is not void in clubs, and likely has either the ♣A or ♣Q. There is a very good chance that partner has two aces, one of which is the ♣A. That leaves partner around 8-12 HCP in hearts and diamonds. Therefore 6♣ will either be cold or I will have a very good play for it, especially since I can play West for any non-spade values.*

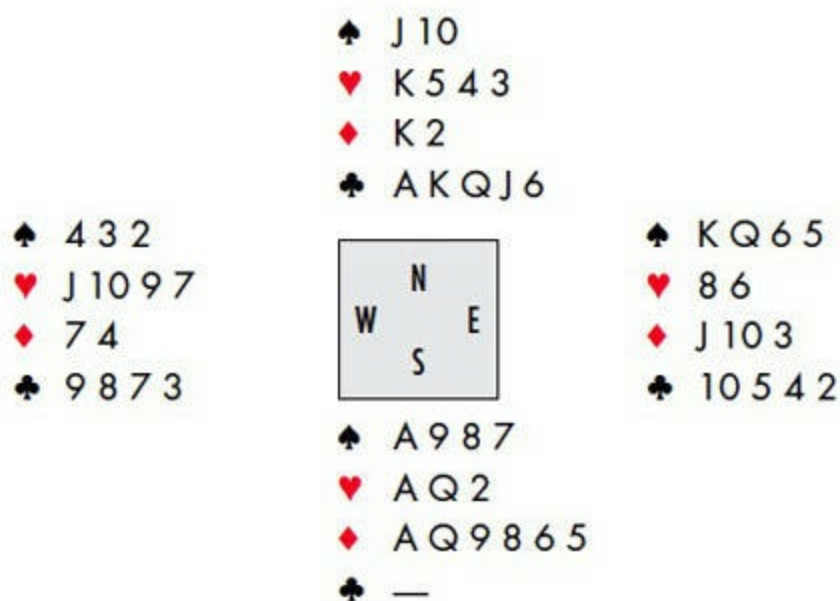
The full deal:



### *Lessons to Learn*

- Analyze all available inferences before deciding on your action.
- It is okay to take a calculated risk. Here, Bernstein knew that the slam was not 100%, but had no way of finding out. The odds greatly favored bidding 6♣.

2009 Bermuda Bowl, N-S vul.



WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	<i>Karokolev</i>		<i>Danailov</i>
		pass	1♣*
pass	2♣	pass	2♦
pass	2♥	pass	3♦
pass	4♦	pass	4♥
pass	4NT	pass	5♦
pass	5♥	pass	5NT
pass	7NT	all pass	

The critical bid on this auction was Karokolev's 4♦, setting diamonds as trumps. After the cuebid he used RKCB, and found out that he and his partner had all the keycards and the queen of trumps. He then made his second excellent call of 7NT, which will make on deals where diamonds don't split, but hearts and clubs do.

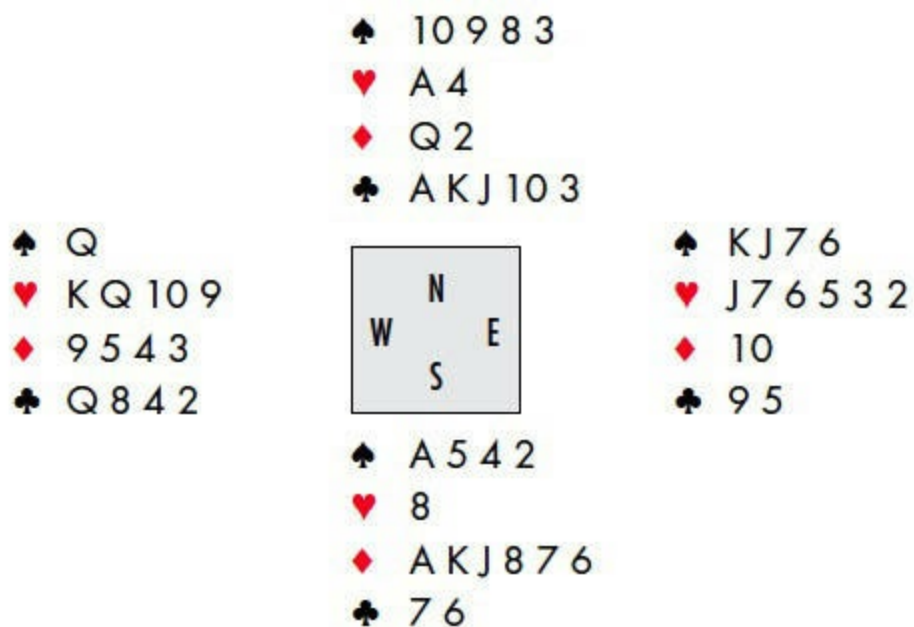
You might say that it is not hard to bid a grand when you have a good 17 HCP and partner opens a strong club, but they didn't manage it at the other table:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		pass	1♣*
pass	2♣	pass	2♦
pass	2♥	pass	3♦
pass	3♠	pass	4♠
pass	5♣	pass	5♦
all pass			

North could not recover from his nebulous 3♠ bid.

2009 USBC, E-W vul.





WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	<i>Jones</i>		<i>Schwartz</i>
		pass	1♦
pass	2♣	pass	2♦
pass	2♠	pass	4♥*
pass	5♥	pass	5♠
pass	6♦	all pass	

Richard Schwartz made a good signoff in 5♠ with poor trumps. Bob Jones made an even better call of 6♦, visualizing that with diamonds as trumps, there were likely sufficient club and diamond winners to come to twelve tricks. Schwartz guessed who had the ♣Q and he and Jones scored +920 for an 11 IMP gain.

As reported in the Daily Bulletin, Mike Miller and Jim Bauer bid this next hand at the 2003 Fall NABC held in New Orleans.



♠ Q 10 5	♠ A K 7 4 2
♥ K Q 10 8 7	♥ A J 5 3
♦ A K	♦ 9 6 4 3
♣ Q 10 7	♣ —

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
<i>Miller</i>		<i>Bauer</i>	
		1♠	pass
2♥ <sup>1</sup>	pass	4♣*	pass
4♦	pass	5♣	pass
7♥	all pass		

1. Game-forcing.

### *Lessons to Learn*

- Prefer a splinter to a raise in a game-forcing auction.
- After splintering into a void, always rebid the suit before cuebidding other controls.

### 2010 USBC. E-W vul.

	♠ 10 6 4	
	♥ J 10 7 3	
	♦ 9 7 6	
	♣ 9 6 5	
♠ K J 7 5 3	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; display: inline-block;">             N W      E S           </div>	♠ A Q 8 2
♥ 4		♥ A 8 2
♦ K 8 3		♦ A Q J 4
♣ A K 8 3		♣ J 10
	♠ 9	
	♥ K Q 9 6 5	
	♦ 10 5 2	
	♣ Q 7 4 2	

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
<i>Moss</i>	<i>Weinstein</i>	<i>Gitelman</i>	<i>Levin</i>
	pass	1♦	1♥
1♠	pass	3♠	pass
4NT	pass	5♦ <sup>1</sup>	pass
5♥*	pass	5NT <sup>2</sup>	pass
7♠	all pass		

1. 0 or 3 keycards.

2. ♠Q but no kings.

Moss reasoned that to justify his jump, Gitelman must have at least one minor-suit queen, probably in diamonds (he would devalue any heart honor but the ace). Moss probably went through a list of possible holdings and then bid the odds-on grand, which after dummy came down went from odds-on to 100%.

Here is a very recent example of showing interest in a slam without overstating your values. I was playing with Don Pearsons.

♠ K 10 8 7 6 5  
 ♥ —  
 ♦ A 9 4 3  
 ♣ A 9 3  
  
 ♠ A J 4 2  
 ♥ A Q 8 7 3  
 ♦ K 7 6  
 ♣ 8

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	<i>Pearsons</i>		<i>Kimelman</i>
	1♠	pass	2♥
pass	2♠ <sup>1</sup>	pass	4♣ <sup>2</sup>
pass	4♦ <sup>3</sup>	pass	4♥ <sup>3</sup>
pass	4♠ <sup>4</sup>	pass	4NT*
pass	5♦ <sup>5</sup>	pass	6♠ <sup>6</sup>
all pass			

1. Space-conserving rebid.

2. Splinter.

3. Cuebids.

4. The key bid of the auction. Willing to cooperate only as far as the game level.

5. 3 keycards.

6. Partner must have marginal values to only cooperate once with three keycards.

Even though there are no top losers, it is unlikely that a grand will be a good proposition considering the limiting 4♠ bid.

### *Lessons to Learn*

- Faced with two descriptive rebids of equal value, make the one that conserves bidding space.
- Opposite a slam try, a cuebid below game does not promise extra values, but just decent ones.
- When making the final decision as to level, consider the whole auction.



# Chapter 12

# FINAL QUIZ

*You are South.*

## PROBLEM 1

Both vul., IMPs.

♠ 10 6 4 2   ♥ Q   ♦ J 10 8 6   ♣ 9 6 3 2

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		1♠	pass
2♣ <sup>1</sup>	2♥	2♠	pass
3♣	4♦	4♥	pass
5♣	pass	6♣	?

1. Game forcing.

## PROBLEM 2

N-S vul., matchpoints.

♠ K Q 10 3   ♥ K 6 4   ♦ 9 7 6   ♣ 9 8 4

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♣ <sup>1</sup>	1NT	?

1. Unbalanced or 15+ balanced.

## PROBLEM 3

Both vul., IMPs.

♠ Q 7 5   ♥ 7 6   ♦ Q 8 3   ♣ Q J 8 4 3

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	dbl	2♥	pass
pass	2NT	pass	dbl*
			?

#### PROBLEM 4

Both vul., IMPs.

♠ 10 9   ♥ K 9 7 6   ♦ A 7   ♣ A 10 8 6 3

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	1♠	2♥	1♣
pass	3♠	pass	pass
			?

#### PROBLEM 5

N-S vul., IMPs.

♠ —   ♥ A 7   ♦ K 5 2   ♣ A K Q 8 6 5 4 3

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
2♠	2NT	3♠	?

#### PROBLEM 6

Neither vul., IMPs.

♠ 5 ♥ A 10 9 8 5 4 ♦ A K 3 ♣ A 6 5

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1♥
pass	1NT	pass	2♣
pass	2NT	pass	?

## PROBLEM 7

Both vul., matchpoints.

♠ K Q 10 8 2 ♥ — ♦ K J 7 5 2 ♣ K 10 7

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		2♥	2♠
4♥	dbl	pass	?

## PROBLEM 8

E-W vul., IMPs.

♠ Q 8 2 ♥ A K 9 6 ♦ A K 6 4 3 2 ♣ —

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	pass	4♣	?

## PROBLEM 9

N-S vul., IMPs.



♠ K 7 5   ♥ J 5   ♦ 9 7 5 3   ♣ A J 9 3

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♦	4♠	pass 5♣ <sup>1</sup>	pass ?

1. Natural, with a diamond fit.

## PROBLEM 10

Both vul., IMPs.

♠ A 8 6 5 3   ♥ A J 5   ♦ —   ♣ A K Q J 6

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	pass	1♥	?

## PROBLEM 11

N-S vul., IMPs.

♠ Q 9 7 3 2   ♥ A 4   ♦ 9 4   ♣ A J 8 3

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♥	pass	1♠
pass	3♦	pass	3NT
pass	4♦	pass	?

## PROBLEM 12

N-S vul., IMPs.

♠ A 10 6 ♥ A ♦ A K 10 9 7 5 ♣ A J 2

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	pass	1♠	dbl
1NT	dbl	2♣	?

### PROBLEM 13

Both vul., IMPs.

♠ 2 ♥ 8 4 3 ♦ A K 8 7 5 ♣ K Q 6 2

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
2♠ <sup>1</sup>	pass	3♠	?

1. Spades and a minor.

### PROBLEM 14

N-S vul., IMPs.

♠ Q 5 4 ♥ A 10 3 ♦ 6 5 2 ♣ A K J 4

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		1♠	?

### PROBLEM 15

N-S vul., IMPs.

♠ 8 7 5 2 ♥ A K 7 3 ♦ A K Q 7 4 ♣ —

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	3♦	1♣ pass	2♦ ?

## PROBLEM 16

Both vul., IMPs.

♠ A ♥ A K ♦ 10 8 7 2 ♣ A K Q J 5 3

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass 4♠	pass dbl	2♣ pass	dbl ?

## PROBLEM 17

Both vul., IMPs.

♠ 9 7 ♥ 9 6 4 3 ♦ J 9 6 ♣ A J 10 2

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1NT <sup>1</sup>	2♥	pass	pass ?

1. 15-17 HCP.

## PROBLEM 18

N-S vul., IMPs.

♠ A K 9 8 7 ♥ 7 ♦ 9 ♣ K Q 9 8 7 2

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1♣
1♥	pass	2♦	2♠
3♦	pass	pass	?

## PROBLEM 19

N-S vul., IMPs.

♠ K 5 2 ♥ 3 ♦ J 9 6 5 4 2 ♣ 8 3 2

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			pass
3♥	dbl	4♥	pass
pass	dbl	pass	?

## PROBLEM 20

Both vul., IMPs.

♠ A K Q 5 4 ♥ 6 5 4 ♦ J 4 3 ♣ K Q

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1NT <sup>1</sup>
dbl	pass	pass	?

1. 15-17 HCP.

## PROBLEM 21

N-S vul., IMPs.

♠ 7 5 4 3   ♥ K 9 7 6 5   ♦ K J 2   ♣ J

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		1NT <sup>1</sup>	pass
2♣	pass	2♠	pass
pass	dbl	pass	?

1. 14-17 HCP.

## PROBLEM 22

Both vul., IMPs.

♠ 2   ♥ K Q   ♦ Q 8 7 6 5   ♣ J 10 8 7 6

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		pass	pass
1♦	1♥	pass	2♣
pass	2♦	2♠	pass
pass	3♥	pass	pass
3♠	dbl	pass	?

## PROBLEM 23

Neither vul., IMPs.

♠ 10 6 5 2   ♥ 10 5 4 3 2   ♦ 10 3   ♣ J 2

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			pass
1♣	1♠	2♥	2♠
3NT	4♦	6♣	pass
pass	dbl	pass	?

PROBLEM 24

Neither vul., IMPs.

♠ 6 5 4 3 2   ♥ 5   ♦ A 9 2   ♣ A K 9 8

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	1♦	1♥	1♠ <sup>1</sup>
2NT <sup>2</sup>	pass	3♥	dbl
pass	4♣	pass	?

- 1. Five-plus spades.
- 2. Four-plus card heart raise, 6-10 points.

PROBLEM 25

Neither vul., IMPs.

♠ Q J 8 7 2  
♥ K 8 2  
♦ A K J 4  
♣ Q  
  
♠ A K 10 9 6  
♥ Q 6 5  
♦ Q 10 3  
♣ K 4

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♠	3♣	4♣
5♣	6♣	all pass	

Assess the blame. North-South are playing a strong club system.

# FINAL QUIZ — SOLUTIONS

## SOLUTION 1

Both vul., IMPs.

♠ 10 6 4 2   ♥ Q   ♦ J 10 8 6   ♣ 9 6 3 2

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		1♠	pass
2♣ <sup>1</sup>	2♥	2♠	pass
3♣	4♦	4♥	pass
5♣	pass	6♣	?

1. Game forcing.

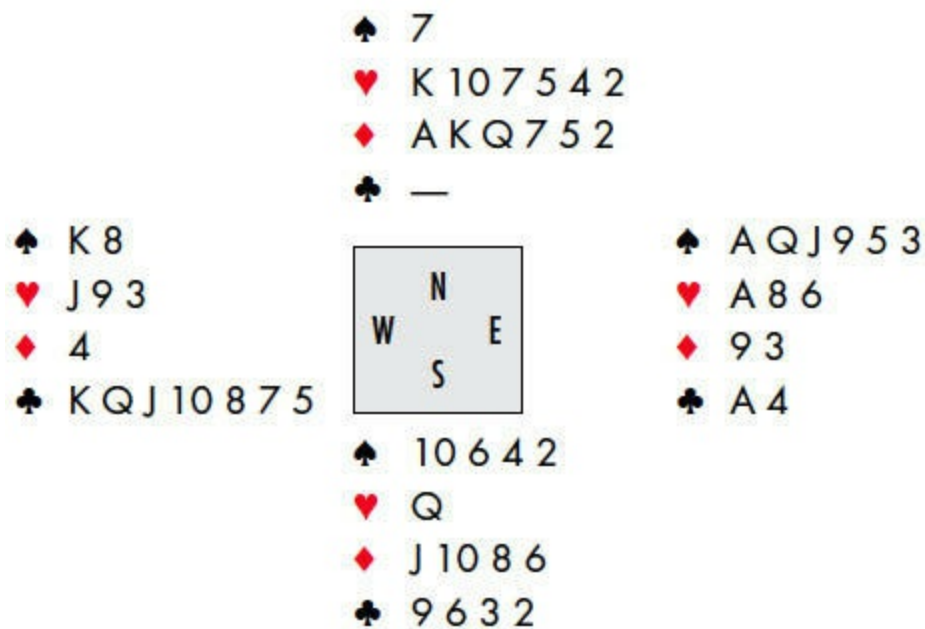
What do you do?

This was probably the most talked-about deal from the round robin in the 2010 Rosenblum. Before you can decide what to bid, you have to examine and analyze what partner has shown.

The first thing to notice is the vulnerability. Partner has a very good hand, either in high cards or playing strength, to bid 2♥ at these colors. Most likely the latter as the opponents have opened the bidding and forced to game. Then partner jumps to 4♦ over 3♣! What is going on? Partner is showing a hand with good values and either 6-6 or 7-6 in the red suits. With a 6-5 hand partner would bid only 3♦. With 5-5 he would probably show both suits by bidding 2NT directly over 2♣.

You have a monster hand in support of diamonds — 6♦ should either make or go one down. But there is one other question to ask yourself before you make this bid: Do I know what to do if the opponents bid 7♣?

The answer to this question is 'yes'. West does not have first- (or likely second-) round diamond control as he just signed off in 5♣. If East had the ♦A he would have bid 5♦ not 6♣. So bid 6♦, as you know 7♣ will not make. The full deal:



## SOLUTION 2

N-S vul., matchpoints.

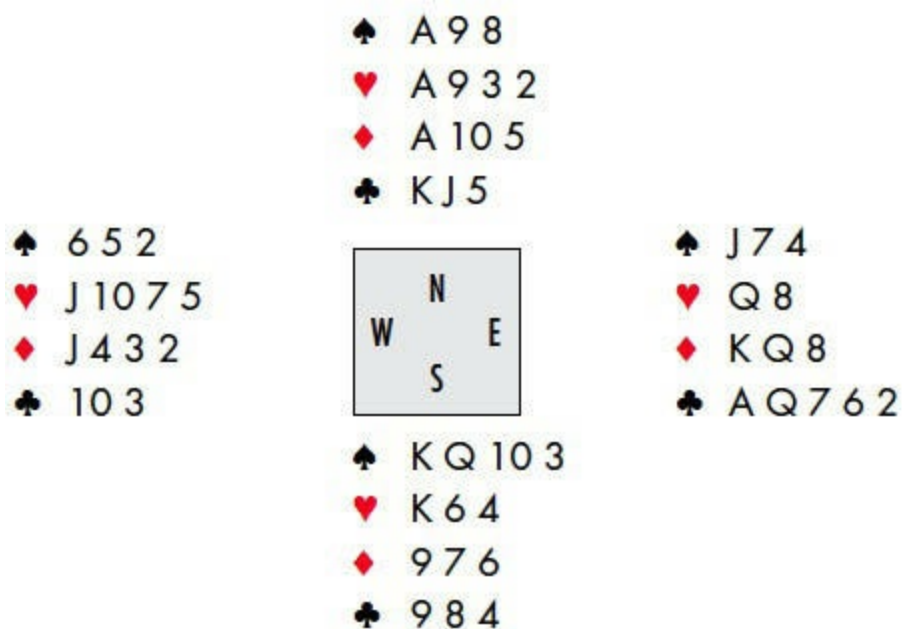
♠ K Q 10 3   ♥ K 6 4   ♦ 9 7 6   ♣ 9 8 4			
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♣ <sup>1</sup>	1NT	?

1. Unbalanced or 15+ balanced.

I think the odds favor doubling. Partner will pass with either a balanced 15+ hand or a decent unbalanced minimum plus. With a weak distributional minimum he may pull. You have a little less than a traditional double in this situation, but your good high-card structure should aid with the defense.

The full deal (hands rotated):





In the 2010 World Pairs, I doubled 1NT for +300 and 54 out of 70 matchpoints. East had taken some liberties with his 1NT overcall, and was punished accordingly.

### SOLUTION 3

Both vul., IMPs.

♠ Q 7 5   ♥ 7 6   ♦ Q 8 3   ♣ Q J 8 4 3

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	dbl	2♥	pass
pass	2NT	pass	dbl*
			?

What do you do?

I guess the first question is, 'What does partner have?' He has 16-18 HCP to invite game. Why then didn't he bid notrump on the first round of bidding? Probably because his hand was more suited to takeout than to notrump, so he probably has honor-doubleton in hearts. Bid 3♣. The opponents will easily set up their suit against 3NT, and you are doomed unless there are nine running tricks, which is unlikely.

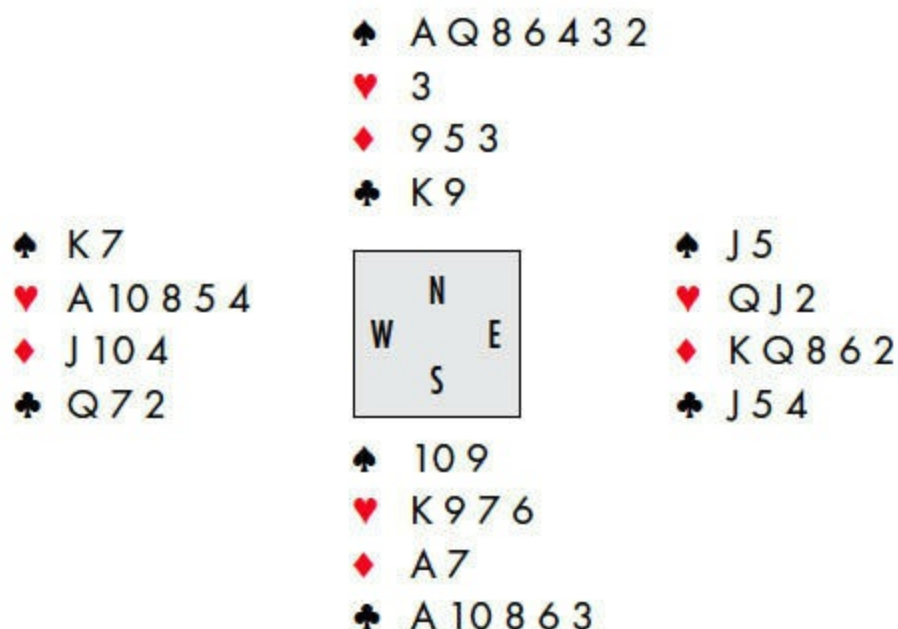
The full deal from the 2010 Winnipeg Regional:



Both vul., IMPs.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	1♠	2♥	1♣
pass	3♣	pass	pass
			?

I would bid 4♠. It is right in theory and also turns out to be in practice. The full deal (hands rotated):



South passed at the 2009 World Team Championships, and that meant 10 IMPs away.

## SOLUTION 5

N-S vul., IMPs.

♠ — ♥ A 7 ♦ K 5 2 ♣ A K Q 8 6 5 4 3			
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
2♠	2NT	3♠	?

What a hand! Partner has made a natural 2NT overcall, showing 15-18 HCP and you have this monster! Okay, how can you bid this hand? Well, you can cuebid 4♠. Partner will bid a red suit and you will...? Mmm, that doesn't seem to help. You can't cuebid a red suit before you set the trump suit, and you can't bid clubs at any level because it is non-forcing.

Okay, let's try a different approach. What are partner's 16 points (a low average)? Let's say 6 in spades, 10 elsewhere. If he has the ♦AQ and ♥K, seven is cold, i.e.

♠ A Q x x ♥ K 10 x ♦ A Q x x ♣ J x

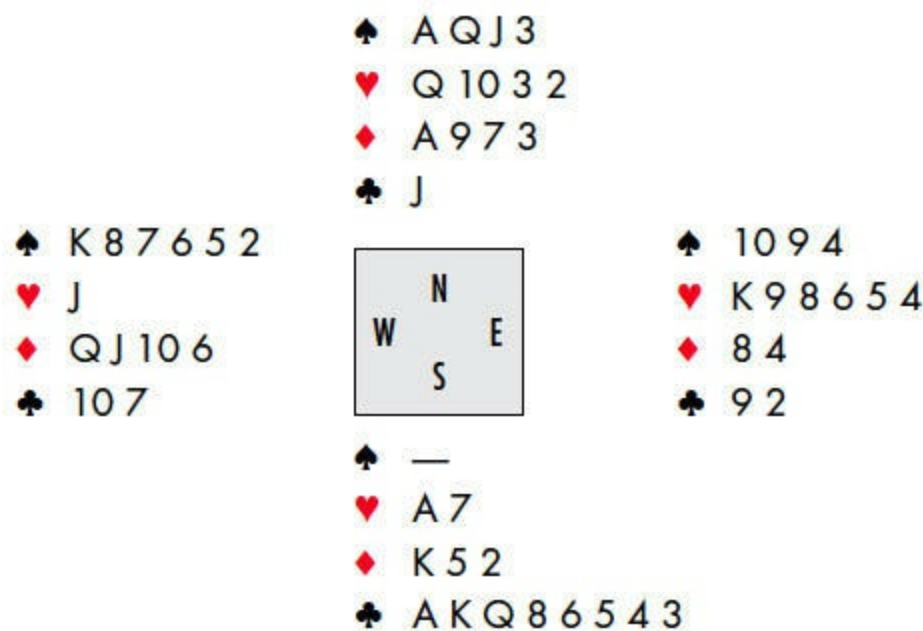
However partner could have this:

♠ A Q x ♥ Q J x ♦ A J x x ♣ J x x

Okay, that is a 15-point hand and you still have an excellent play for seven. If you are off the ♦A, unlikely as this may be, they probably would still have to lead diamonds if, say, partner has

♠ A K Q ♥ K x x ♦ Q J x x ♣ J x x

I think you should just bid 7♣. The interesting full deal (hands rotated):



In a 1989 Venice Cup match the bidding went:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
2♠	2NT	3♠	4♠
pass	5♥	pass	7♣
pass	7♦	pass	pass
dbl!	7NT	dbl	all pass

I have a lot of sympathy for the 7♦ call. From North’s perspective, partner was offering a choice of clubs or diamonds. I have no sympathy for the terrible greedy double by West! Justice was partially served when 7NT made on a squeeze, and instead of +200 East-West scored -2490.

### SOLUTION 6

Neither vul., IMPs.

♠ 5
♥ A 10 9 8 5 4
♦ A K 3
♣ A 6 5

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1♥
pass	1NT	pass	2♣
pass	2NT	pass	?

If you have been following this book it is easy — bid 3♦. You have not shown your extra values, and there is still a chance for game, likely in hearts. You might as well show your spade shortness by bidding 3♦. Partner can then reevaluate his hand knowing that your distribution is either 1=5=3=4, 1=6=3=3, 0=6=3=4, 0=5=4=4 or 0=5=3=5. At least you will have a very good chance to get to the good diamond slam. Partner’s hand:

♠ K 10
♥ J
♦ Q 10 9 7 5 2
♣ K Q 9 4

In the *Bridge World* “Challenge the Champs”, October 1994, Ron Rubin bid 3♥, and passed when partner Mike Becker bid game in hearts.

### SOLUTION 7

Both vul., matchpoints.

♠ K Q 10 8 2 ♥ — ♦ K J 7 5 2 ♣ K 10 7

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
4♥	dbl	2♥ pass	2♠ ?

Partner is showing convertible values and denies three spades, otherwise he would have simply bid 4♠. You have an offense-oriented hand and a second five-card suit. Bid it! In the 2008 Nail Life Masters Open Pairs, Nikolay Demirev bid 5♦, which made for almost all the matchpoints. The full deal:

	♠ 6	
	♥ A Q 6	
	♦ A Q 10 9 3	
	♣ 9 6 4 2	
♠ A J 9 7 5 4	<div> <div>W</div> <div>N</div> <div>E</div> <div>S</div> </div>	♠ 3
♥ 8 5 4 2		♥ K J 10 9 7 3
♦ 4		♦ 8 6
♣ Q 5		♣ A J 8 3
	♠ K Q 10 8 2	
	♥ —	
	♦ K J 7 5 2	
	♣ K 10 7	

He and Ralph Katz went on to win the event.

## SOLUTION 8

E-W vul., IMPs.

♠ Q 8 2 ♥ A K 9 6 ♦ A K 6 4 3 2 ♣ —

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	pass	4♣	?

There are a couple of basic choices: double and 4♦. A third (4NT showing an unknown two-suiter) does not appeal to me with the disparity in suits, and could lead to a big swing against you when partner has 4=3=2=4 shape and a weak hand.

It is important to decide what you are going to do after partner's response. Here is a complete list of choices:

1) Double, then:

If partner bids 4♦

- Pass
- 5♦
- 5♣

I would bid 5♣.

If partner bids 4♥,

- Pass
- 6♥
- 5♣

I would bid 5♣.

If partner bids 4♠,

- Pass
- 5♦
- 5♣

I would pass.

2) 4♦, then:

Over four of a major

- Pass
- 5♣

I would pass 4♠ and bid 5♣ over 4♥.

Over 5♦

- Pass
- 6♦
- 5♣

I would pass.

At the table my partner doubled and passed 4♠. North's hand:

♠ 10 9 7 6 5 3 ♥ J 4 ♦ Q 10 8 ♣ A 5

We won a big swing when the opponents got too high.

## SOLUTION 9

N-S vul., IMPs.

♠ K 7 5 ♥ J 5 ♦ 9 7 5 3 ♣ A J 9 3			
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♦	4♠	pass 5♣ <sup>1</sup>	pass ?

1. Natural, with a diamond fit.

What do you do now?

### *The Theory*

In this situation, this is what the following bids mean:

- Pass — nothing to say
- Double — values, should be at least 9 HCP, but could be two aces. Good for defense and offense.
- 5♠ — ambiguous as to values.
- 5♦ / 5♥ — really good hand for spades, ace of suit bid — a slam try.



The full deal:

You have exactly what partner needs for six, but it's very tough to get there with any confidence.

Both vul., IMPs.

1♠ too risky that it will go all pass. Otherwise okay.

2♣ same problem as with 1♠.

2♥ Michaels (or whatever your two-suited overcall is) is the best call. Treating your two-suiter as very strong or very weak works well, as it did for Lall in the 2011 USBC.

The full deal, and bidding at both tables:

	♠ 9	
	♥ 10 7 6	
	♦ A Q 5 3	
	♣ 10 9 8 7 2	
♠ J 10 2		♠ K Q 7 4
♥ 3 2		♥ K Q 9 8 4
♦ K J 10 8 6		♦ 9 7 4 2
♣ 5 4 3		♣ —
	♠ A 8 6 5 3	
	♥ A J 5	
	♦ —	
	♣ A K Q J 6	

**Table 1**

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
<i>Zagorin</i>	<i>Moss</i>	<i>Bathurst</i>	<i>Gitelman</i>
pass	pass	1♥	1♠
all pass			

**Table 2**

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
<i>Hampson</i>	<i>Grue</i>	<i>Greco</i>	<i>Lall</i>
pass	pass	1♥	2♥
pass	2NT	pass	6♣
all pass			

I like the 6♣ bid, as science will not help on this kind of hand. Lall bid what he thought he could make. I equally appreciate the pass of 1♠ by Bathurst at Table 1. West cannot have much as East is looking at spades, and has a void in clubs. Why try for a partscore in diamonds when the opponents could be (and are!) missing a slam?

## SOLUTION 11

N-S vul., IMPs.

♠ Q 9 7 3 2   ♥ A 4   ♦ 9 4   ♣ A J 8 3

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♥	pass	1♠
pass	3♦	pass	3NT
pass	4♦	pass	?

Partner is probably making a slam try. He is at least 6-5 with a very good hand. With a poorer hand, he might risk a pass of 3NT or simply bid 4♥. With this distribution he may have a hand with few enough losers to have opened 2♣, but have been afraid that the auction might get out of control. Do you want to cooperate?

You bet! You have two aces including the ♥A, a ruffing value and the most trumps you can have on this auction. What have you shown so far? You could have as few as 4 HCP and more length in the black suits, with no working high cards.

The best bid is 5♣. If partner bids 5♦ you will simply take a preference to 5♥ and likely play there. Partner will actually bid 5NT — Grand Slam Force.

North's hand:

♠ — ♥ K Q 9 6 3 2 ♦ A K Q J 10 3 ♣ Q

In fact 7♥ was bid at most tables during the 2011 CNTC. Alas, my partner bid only 4♥ here, which ended our auction and cost us 16 IMPs!

## SOLUTION 12

N-S vul., IMPs.

♠ A 10 6 ♥ A ♦ A K 10 9 7 5 ♣ A J 2

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	pass	1♠	dbl
1NT	dbl	2♣	?

Partner's double shows 8-11 HCP (North is a passed hand). If you had a normal takeout double, you would either double 2♣ for penalties or pass and see what partner does. Here you should bid 2♦. A new suit shows a hand too strong to overcall, therefore 19+ HCP. The double creates a game force and allows North-South to explore their best contract. The full deal from the 2009 Bermuda Bowl:

	♠ Q 7 5 3	
	♥ K Q 10	
	♦ Q 8 6 4	
	♣ 7 3	
♠ 4 2		♠ K J 9 8
♥ 9 5 3 2		♥ J 8 7 6 4
♦ J 3		♦ 2
♣ K Q 10 8 5		♣ 9 6 4
	<div> <div>W</div> <div>N</div> <div>E</div> <div>S</div> </div>	
	♠ A 10 6	
	♥ A	
	♦ A K 10 9 7 5	
	♣ A J 2	

South simply bid 3NT, giving up on slam and losing 12 IMPs when the other North-South had a very nice auction to 6♦:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	pass	2♥	dbl
3♥	3NT	pass	4♦
pass	5♦	pass	6♦
all pass			

### SOLUTION 13

Both vul., IMPs.

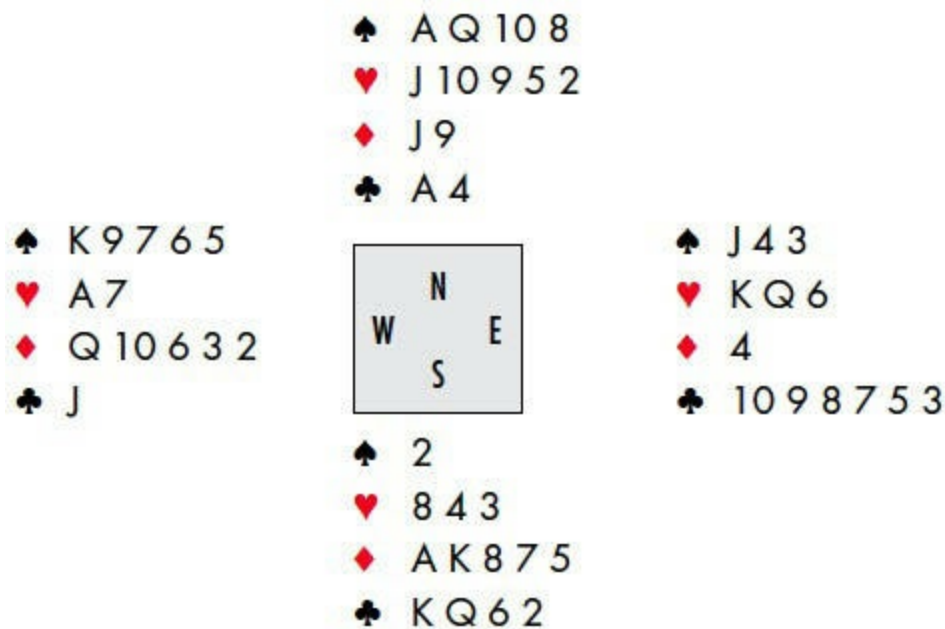
♠ 2   ♥ 8 4 3   ♦ A K 8 7 5   ♣ K Q 6 2			
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
2♠ <sup>1</sup>	pass	3♠	?

1. Spades and a minor.

It is dangerous to enter the auction. Here you know that West has one of your minors, and partner rates to have spades and hearts. East could have many different hands for his 3♠ bid, but likely does not have a lot of strength.

However, as dangerous as it is to enter the auction, it is more dangerous to pass: there will be many deals where you can make a vulnerable game. Double.

The full deal from the 2009 Venice Cup:



With the North hand I would take my sure plus by converting the double to penalties. Either way you are either +500 or +620 in 4♥. At the table, South passed 3♠ and collected a paltry 200.

## SOLUTION 14

N-S vul., IMPs.

♠ Q 5 4   ♥ A 10 3   ♦ 6 5 2   ♣ A K J 4			
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		1♠	?

There are three options:

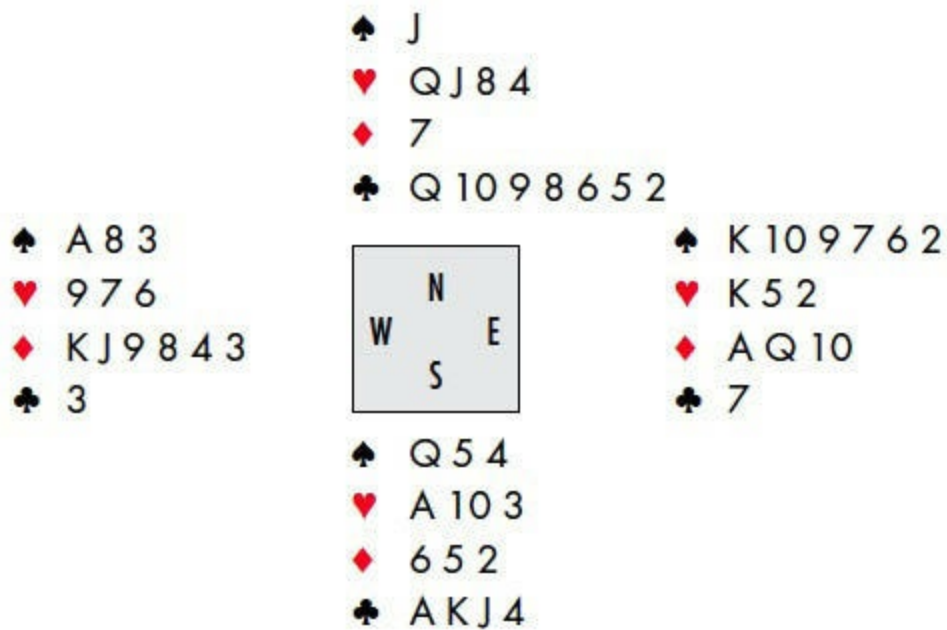
- Pass
- 1NT
- Double

We looked earlier at takeout doubles and some of the minimum criteria for such a bid. With the wasted ♠Q and 4-3-3-3 pattern, this hand does not quite make it. Bidding 1NT is tempting, but you could get killed if the opponents have the majority of high cards. Pass is what you normally do when you have such a hand, and then you can decide

whether to come in later.

There is one flaw with this latter reasoning, and that is the vulnerability. There is no auction where you could comfortably balance. In fact, the opponents might take advantage of their non-vulnerable status and bid on hands where you can make lots. Especially when vulnerable, remember Tip 50: *Show your values*.

In another words, it is too dangerous to pass as your side might be on for game. Of the two bidding options, double is the better (less likely to result in your getting doubled). The full deal from the 2011 CNTC:



Partner chose to pass, so we defended 2♠ for -140 instead of scoring +600 or +620.

### SOLUTION 15

N-S vul., IMPs.

♠ 8 7 5 2   ♥ A K 7 3   ♦ A K Q 7 4   ♣ —			
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		1♠	2♦
pass	3♦	pass	?

What do you do now?

You have enough points for game, but with this hand it is easier to look at your losers and think about how many partner can reasonably be expected to cover. The reason for this is that you know where the spade honors are located. You have six losers (actual losers, not Losing Trick Count), four in spades and two in hearts. Since West had not raised spades, there is some concern that partner may even hold three of them. If North has a doubleton spade, then you should easily be able to overruff West with dummy's diamond holding. If partner has a singleton spade, there should be no problems.

Two other issues are worth consideration. One is that partner may have fewer than the 10 points that are usually needed for a raise, as vulnerable overcalls can be very good in playing strength. The other issue is how much is wasted in clubs.

These are all very good points and questions. The problem is partner can't really help you decide. He doesn't know that

♠ X ♥ X X X X ♦ J 10 X X X ♣ X X X

is all you need for game!

For that reason, and the scoring, it is quite reasonable just to bid 5♦ and hope it makes. For the record in the 2007 Keohane N. A. Swiss, Pamela Granovetter chose to invite with 3♥; partner and husband Matthew bid 4♦ with

♠ 10 4 ♥ Q 2 ♦ J 10 9 6 5 ♣ 10 8 7 3

and a good game was missed. I guess 3♥ is okay, but only if you want to try for slam!

However, slam is unlikely and maybe it is better not to give the opponents extra information and just jump to game. In fact, LHO with a heart stack may try a speculative double. I am always bidding game on this hand, and would do it directly over the raise.

## SOLUTION 16

Both vul., IMPs.



♠ A ♥ AK ♦ 10 8 7 2 ♣ AK Q J 5 3

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	pass	2♠	dbl
4♠	dbl	pass	?

What do you think is the right call here?

Partner's double of 4♠ shows values, somewhere around the 7-10 range. Obviously most of his high cards should be in diamonds. Bid 6♣. You have no intelligent way to try for seven as the opponents have preempted you well, so just hope that partner's diamond cards are enough for six. And don't do what I did! The full deal (hands rotated):

♠ K Q 9 6  
♥ 10 8 7 5 2  
♦ 9  
♣ 6 4 2

♠ 8 3  
♥ J 9 6  
♦ A K Q 4  
♣ 10 9 8 7

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ A  
♥ A K  
♦ 10 8 7 2  
♣ A K Q J 5 3

♠ J 10 7 5 4 2  
♥ Q 4 3  
♦ J 6 5 3  
♣ —

In the 2010 CNTC Nick and Judy Gartaganis showed us that preempts work, but sometimes life is unfair. I passed 4♠ doubled and we beat it one for +200. However, we won 7 IMPs instead of losing 19. Thurston and Willis at the other table bid a good grand in diamonds when our partners gave them a free run, only to be foiled by the unlucky diamond position. The bridge gods can be cruel. As a side note, here the ‘bridge gods’ were only moderately cruel as 7♣ was bid at many tables, and all declarers found the fortuitous criss-cross squeeze, with East not being able to maintain both his heart and diamond holdings during the running of the trump suit.

## SOLUTION 17

Both vul., IMPs.

♠ 9 7   ♥ 9 6 4 3   ♦ J 9 6   ♣ A J 10 2			
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1NT <sup>1</sup>	2♥	pass	pass ?

1. 15-17 HCP.

Partner has entered the auction, vulnerable at teams, against a strong notrump, so he has a good hand. You have a very good hand under the circumstances. Four trumps, a doubleton spade, a good club holding and a little something in diamonds. Declaring will be easy, and defending in the West seat tough. East also has a blind lead. I would bid 3♥, as I think 4♥ is a bit too aggressive. The full deal (hands rotated).

♠ K 10 3 2		♠ A 6 5	
♥ K 10		♥ A Q J 8 5 2	
♦ A Q 2		♦ K 7	
♣ K 8 6 3		♣ 9 7	
	<div>W<div>N S</div>E</div>		
		♠ 9 7	
		♥ 9 6 4 3	
		♦ J 9 6	
		♣ A J 10 2	
			♠ Q J 8 4
			♥ 7
			♦ 10 8 5 4 3
			♣ Q 5 4

In the 2008 World Seniors Championship final, South chose to pass and incurred a 10 IMP loss. As a side note, North has an interesting dilemma after a 1NT opener. He could aggressively double, pass and hope for +100 or +200 on defense, or bid 2♥ — which could easily go minus if partner has no entry. I would be tempted to double. If East passes that is +800 on the ♥A lead, and +1100 or +1400 on the ♣9 lead!

SOLUTION 18

N-S vul., IMPs.

♠ A K 9 8 7   ♥ 7   ♦ 9   ♣ K Q 9 8 7 2

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	pass	2♦	1♣
3♦	pass	pass	2♠
			?

This problem came up in the National IMP Pairs at the 2010 Reno NABC.

You have a very good playing strength hand if partner has a fit. Does he or doesn't he?

No, he doesn't. How do you know? The key is what you have shown. Your bidding 2♠, vulnerable against not, against two bidding opponents already shows a powerful playing hand, at least 6-4. With more strength and less distribution you would double 2♦, and then bid spades.

I talked in Chapter 10 about 'bidding your values'. You have done so quite well. *Don't bid your values twice.* Partner has heard you, but has chosen to pass. Trust partner's decision.

The full deal:

♠ Q 10 3  
♥ Q 9 8 4 3 2  
♦ 10 8 5  
♣ 6

♠ 6 4  
♥ A K 10 6 5  
♦ K Q J 6  
♣ J 5

W

N  
S  
E

♠ J 5 2  
♥ J  
♦ A 7 4 3 2  
♣ A 10 4 3

♠ A K 9 8 7  
♥ 7  
♦ 9  
♣ K Q 9 8 7 2

Even with partner's spade fit, spades breaking and the ♣A onside, 3♠ would go down at least one with good defense, probably doubled. You have already shown a hand with powerful playing strength, and that is exactly what you have.

Tip 51: Don't bid your values twice. Try to find a sequence that accurately describes your holdings, then you can trust whatever decision partner makes.

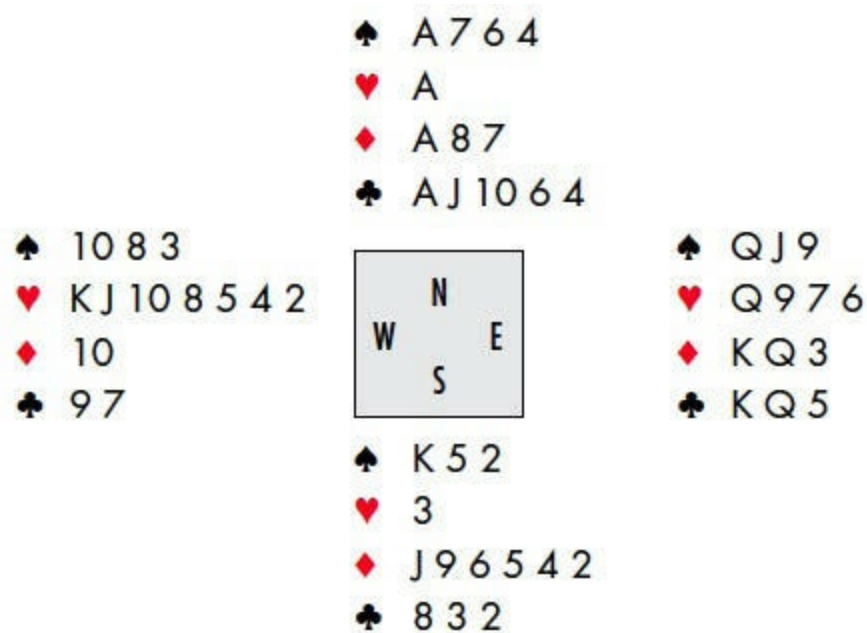
## SOLUTION 19

N-S vul., IMPs.

♠ K 5 2   ♥ 3   ♦ J 9 6 5 4 2   ♣ 8 3 2			
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
3♥	dbl	4♥	pass
pass	dbl	pass	pass
			?

Partner has shown a very good hand. He expects to beat 4♥ but pass by you is not mandatory if you think there is a game or slam. *If you bid, you expect to make game most of the time, and are not bidding out of fear that 4♥ may make.* Here, if partner has a diamond fit, 5♦ may make, but North may not have a perfect takeout double of 3♥ — preempts force imperfect choices. He may even have two small diamonds. Pass. Be happy that you have a king to contribute to defense.

The full deal from the 1981 Camrose:



South bid 5♦, which had no chance but went down *only* two for -200 when the spades split 3-3. Meanwhile, 4♥ doubled is off two for +300.

## SOLUTION 20

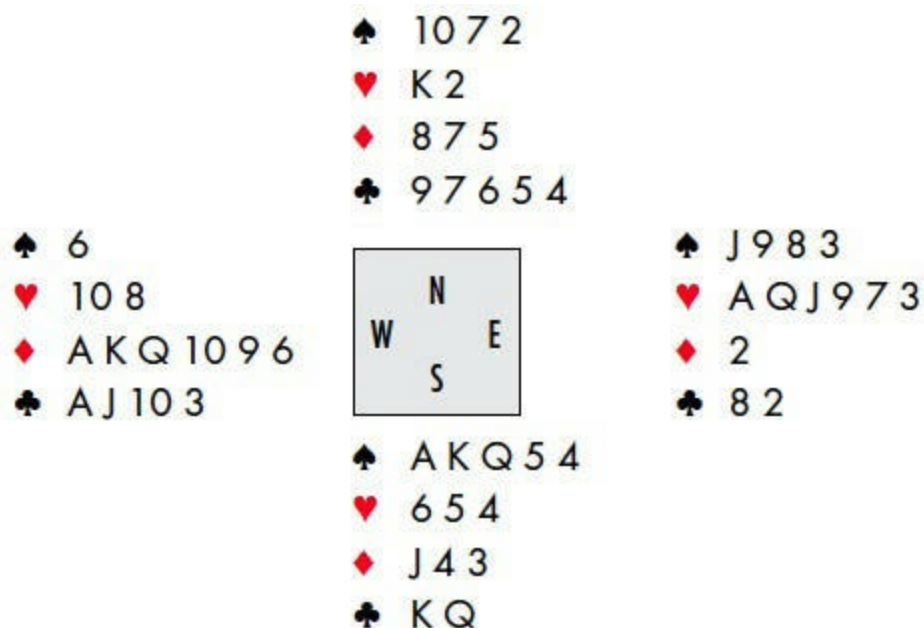
Both vul., IMPs.

♠ A K Q 5 4   ♥ 6 5 4   ♦ J 4 3   ♣ K Q			
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		pass	1NT <sup>1</sup>
dbl	pass	pass	?

1. 15-17 HCP.

Sounds like partner doesn't have much in the way of high cards. You have two suits wide open, and could lose eight or nine tricks in those suits, plus the ♣A, if that is missing. That translates into -800 or -1100. A better chance is to run to 2♠. You have a very good suit, and might not even get doubled. Even if you do, you could easily have six tricks (five trumps and the club).

The full deal:



In the 1998 Macallan Pairs, South chose to pass and didn't score a trick in 1NT doubled!

## SOLUTION 21

N-S vul., IMPs.

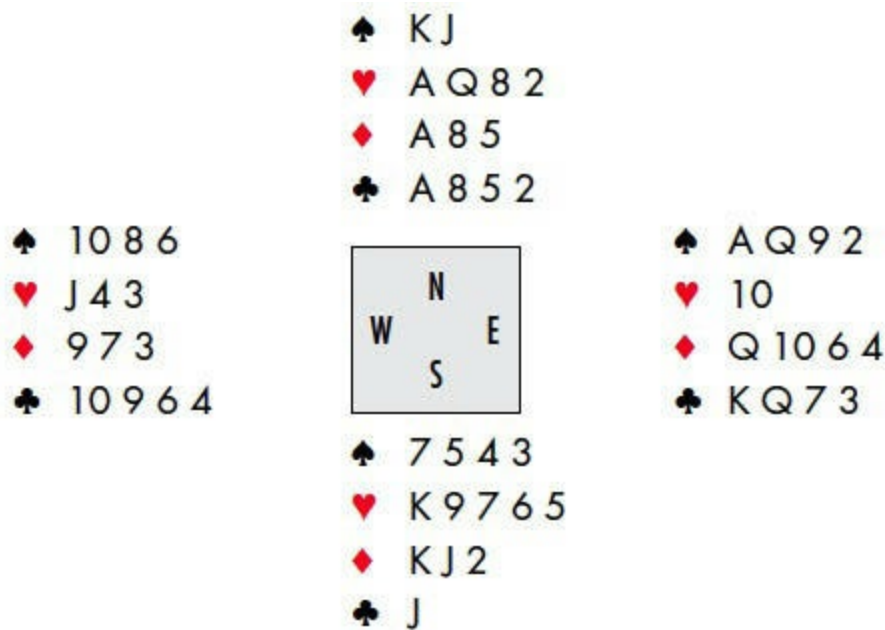
♠ 7 5 4 3   ♥ K 9 7 6 5   ♦ K J 2   ♣ J			
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		1NT <sup>1</sup>	pass
2♣	pass	2♠	pass
pass	dbl	pass	?

1. 14-17 HCP.

You were not expecting partner to enter the auction but he did. Okay, he must be short in spades with 1=4=4=4 distribution. Bid 3♥.

Hang on, maybe you should think more about this unusual auction. How many points does North have? First blush, probably 10+. He is just balancing. But wait! What about the vulnerability? Partner would not risk entering the auction with just two aces and a queen. Especially when you could easily have 4=4=4=1 shape. No, he must have a

And what about the opponents' bidding? They may be trying to steal the hand. You have a great playing strength hand. Even if partner has only 10 HCP, 4♥ will play well. Trust partner and bid accordingly. Bid 4♥. The full deal (hands rotated) from a recent Bermuda Bowl semifinal:



## SOLUTION 22

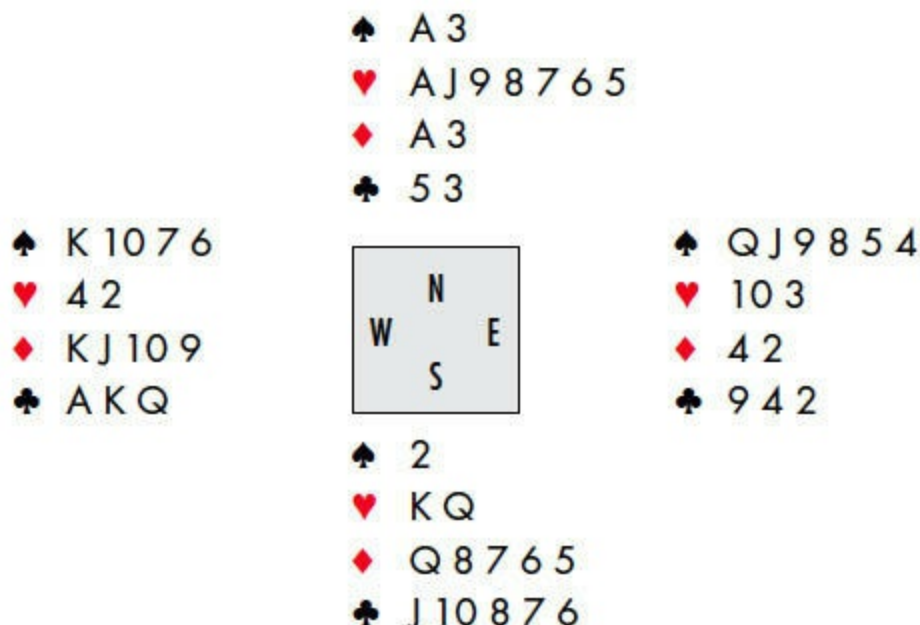
♠ 2   ♥ KQ   ♦ Q8765   ♣ J10876

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		pass	pass
1♦	1♥	pass	2♣
pass	2♦	2♠	pass
pass	3♥	pass	pass
3♠	dbl	pass	?



Partner has ‘bid twice and then doubled’, as per Chapter 9. He is more interested in playing 4♥ than in defending 3♠, but wants to give you the courtesy of allowing you to offer your opinion. You have a clear preference for offense, so you should bid 4♥.

In a recent team game, the South player passed and went -730. The full deal:



## SOLUTION 23

Neither vul., IMPs.

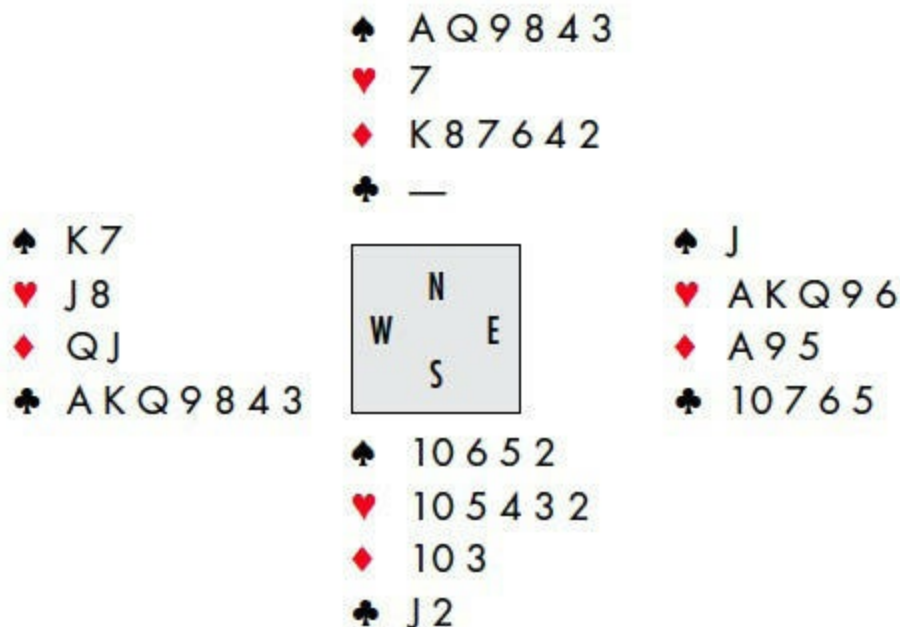
♠ 10 6 5 2   ♥ 10 5 4 3 2   ♦ 10 3   ♣ J 2

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			pass
1♣	1♠	2♥	2♠
3NT	4♦	6♣	pass
pass	dbl	pass	?

Partner has a huge distributional hand. If you were on lead the double would be Lightner, asking for an unusual lead, likely with a heart void. But North is on lead. So is this straight penalties? No. If partner thought he could beat 6♣, he would just pass. Partner actually wants to bid on, but wants to involve you in the decision. With zero defense, you have an easy 6♠ call.



The full deal (hands rotated):



In the 2005 USBC, North actually bid 4♠ over 3NT, and then 6♦ over 6♣. This turned out fine when 6♠ went down only two and the sacrifice was not found at the other table — a big 12 IMP gain. But he was guessing. A better way to go is ‘two bids and a double’ in case partner suspects strongly he can beat 6♣.

## SOLUTION 24

Neither vul., IMPs.

♠ 6 5 4 3 2 ♥ 5 ♦ A 9 2 ♣ A K 9 8

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	1♦	1♥	1♠ <sup>1</sup>
2NT <sup>2</sup>	pass	3♥	dbl
pass	4♣	pass	?

1. Five-plus spades.
2. Four-plus card heart raise, 6-10 points.

What are your thoughts?

Your first thought should be, ‘Hey, there’s a value-showing double from Chapter 8.’

Next, notice that South had an interesting choice on the first round of bidding. A negative double, treating your spade suit as only a four-carder, or 2♣, bidding where your values are located, are excellent alternatives to the 1♠ bid chosen.

After that you need to analyze the bidding. Partner likely has exactly three hearts, otherwise the opponents might have put more pressure on you by bidding 4♥ before you had shared enough information to know what to do. Partner has a minimum. If you were playing weak notrumps (this is the last commercial for the advantages of weak notrumps in this book — I promise!), you would know 100% that partner was exactly 1=3=5=4 (as with any other distribution he would have bid over 2NT).

Can he be 2=3=4=4 shape? Yes, although he would have likely bid 3♠ and not 4♣, as he has denied three with his pass of 2NT. So he likely has a minimum 1=3=5=4.

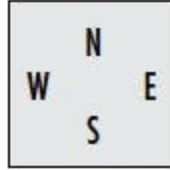
So let’s think of some possible hands for him:

- a) ♠ x ♥ A x x ♦ K Q x x x ♣ Q J x x
- b) ♠ A ♥ Q x x ♦ K Q 10 x x ♣ Q J x x
- c) ♠ K ♥ K x x ♦ K x x x x ♣ Q J x x

There aren’t a lot of them. Opposite either of the first two, slam is good; add the ♦J and it goes to very good. Tell this to partner by bidding 4♥ now. This is a slam try, but does not promise a heart control. If partner has a pure hand, as in examples (a) and (b), he will make a forward-going bid: 6♣ with (a) and 4♠ with (b).

In the 2010 Rosenblum, South simply raised to game. The full deal (a bonus — partner was 5-4 the other way):

	♠ 9	
	♥ A 7 6	
	♦ K Q 10 4	
	♣ Q 10 7 3 2	
♠ K J 8 7		♠ A Q 10
♥ Q 9 8 4		♥ K J 10 3 2
♦ J 8 5 3		♦ 7 6
♣ 6		♣ J 5 4
	♠ 6 5 4 3 2	
	♥ 5	
	♦ A 9 2	
	♣ A K 9 8	



Had South got this right, this deal would have deservedly been promoted to Chapter 11 as an excellent example of thinking then bidding. It is also an excellent example of getting trapped in a mindset (see Chapter 2). My guess is that he was in the mindset, ‘I wonder whether we can make a game and if so where?’ and couldn’t shift his gears to, ‘Forget game, I have a slam try hand.’

## SOLUTION 25

Neither vul., IMPs:

♠ Q J 8 7 2  
 ♥ K 8 2  
 ♦ A K J 4  
 ♣ Q  
 ♠ A K 10 9 6  
 ♥ Q 6 5  
 ♦ Q 10 3  
 ♣ K 4

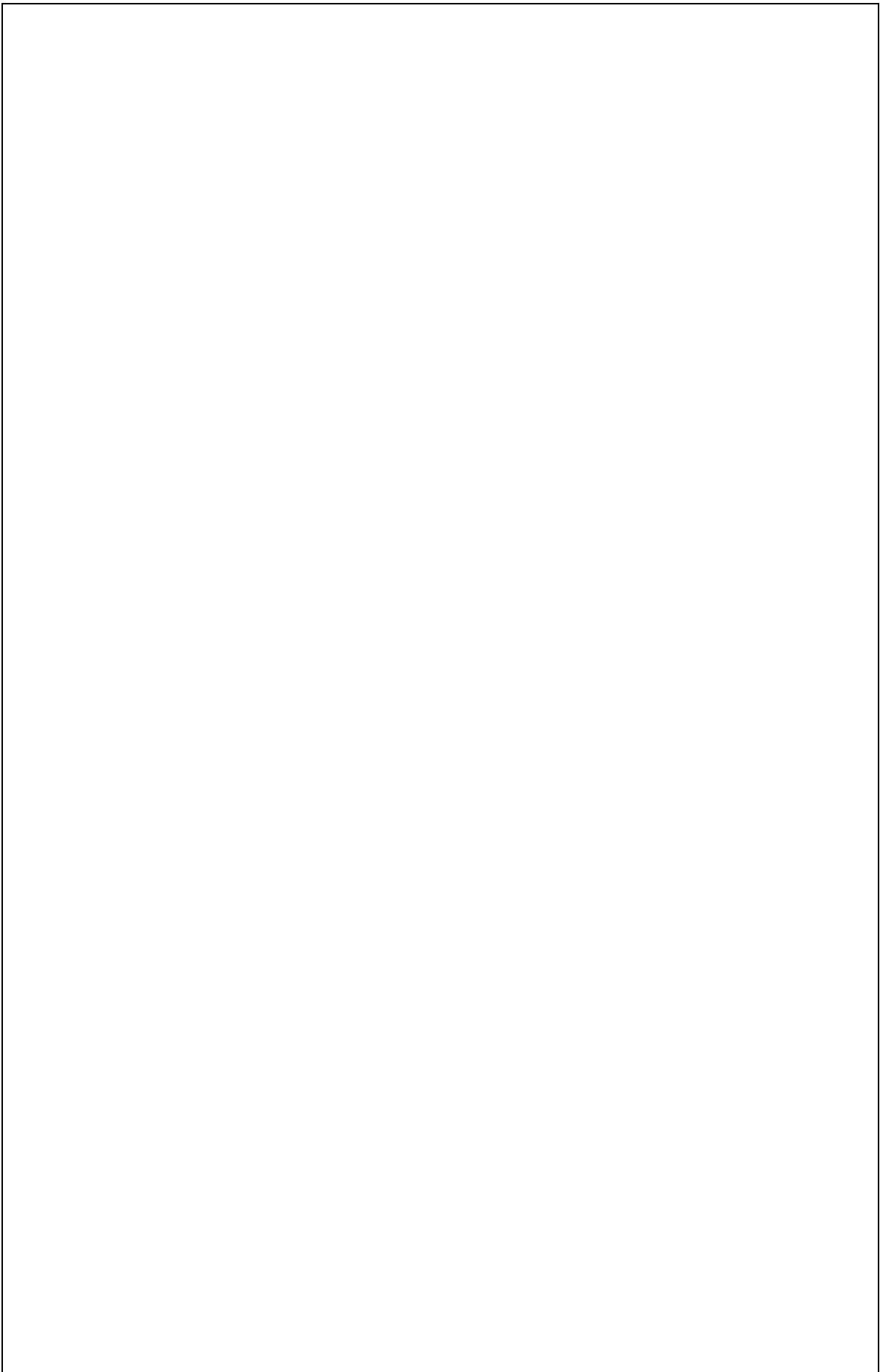
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♠	3♣	4♣
5♣	6♣	all pass	

Assess the blame. North-South were playing a strong club system.

Slam was possible from South's perspective — as little as the ace-king in both red suits would suffice. So South's 4♣ was perfect and he has no share of the blame: it was all North. North had a good hand and should have investigated slam in my view. Over 5♣, 5♦ is the right call. If South then bids 5♠, North should pass. If South bids 5♥, 6♣ or 6♠, great. Over 5♦, despite the ♦Q103, South has soft values and should sign off.

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